LIBRARY
Theological Seminary,
BV 10 .H342 1805 c.2
Haldane, James Alexander,
1768-1851.
A view of the social worship
and ordinances observed by

A

VIEW

OF THE

SOCIAL WORSHIP

AND

ORDINANCES

OBSERVED BY THE FIRST CHRISTIANS,

DRAWN FROM THE SACRED SCRIPTURES ALONE:

BEING

AN ATTEMPT TO ENFORCE THEIR DIVINE OBLIGATION;

AND TO

REPRESENT THE GUILT AND EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING THEM.

BY JAMES ALEX. HALDANE.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY J. RITCHIE.

Sold by OGLE & AIKMAN, Parliament Square; M. OGLE, Wilson's Street, Glasgow; R. OGLE, Turnstyle, and WILLIAMS & SMITH, Stationers Court, London.

1805.

[*Price Four Shillings in Boards*]

PREFACE.

THE Writer of these pages is aware, that the subject of them is by no means popular, even among those who are esteemed the disciples of Christ. Besides the particular prejudices of various persons in favour of their own practice, the subject, by a kind of general consent, has of late years been considered as little connected with practical religion. Whether this has arisen from most parties being conscious that their own modes of worship are little conducive to godliness, and that they cannot be defended from the Scriptures, he presumes not to determine.

The religion of Jesus, in its doctrines, precepts and institutions, is one connected whole; in proportion as one part is overlooked, the force of all will be weakened. He who feels, as every Christian must, his proneness to let slip the most important truths of the word of God, will be thankful that the Lord has graciously employed various means to preserve in our minds the remembrance of them. He has revealed his will in the most engaging and affecting manner, and has also instituted various ordinances of worship, all which represent, and are memorials of the doctrines of his word.

If, in reading the hiſtory of the life of a great man, we had at the ſame time an opportunity of ſeeing his actions delineated in the moſt correct and the fineſt paintings, it would make a far deeper impreſſion on our minds than the mere narrative.

> Things to the mind before unknown,
> And ent'ring by the ear alone,
> Draw leſs attention and ſurpriſe,
> Than had they enter'd by the eyes *.

The ordinances of Chriſt are juſt ſo many ſenſible images of the doctrines he taught. When theſe are obſerved as he delivered them, they greatly tend to impreſs us with juſt views of the truth, and where they are in any meaſure corrupted, they naturally lead us into error and miſapprehenſion. Error and miſapprehenſion in ſentiment, muſt always produce error in practice; for it is certain from the word of God, that holineſs ſprings from the knowledge and belief of the truth.

The great end aimed at in theſe pages, is to promote love and union amongſt Chriſtians, and conſequently the ſucceſs of the goſpel in the world. The author is convinced, that both theſe are intimately connected with the ſubject of the book.

True, genuine, and ſincere union, is abſolutely impracticable while profeſſors neglect to enquire,

* Segnius irritant animos demiſſa per aures,
Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus.
Horat. Ars Poet. tranſlated by Dr Stedman.

to underſtand, and to practiſe the directions of the word of God reſpecting ſocial worſhip, and conſequently their attempts to diffuſe the knowledge of Chriſt will be feeble, inconſiſtent, and ineffectual.

He will be happy to receive correction wherein he has erred, for although he is perſuaded that he treads on ſure ground reſpecting the general principles which he has adopted, he is yet ſenſible that he may, in ſome reſpects, have committed miſtakes in the application of them; and if ſo, he knows that the error muſt have bad conſequences on his mind.

This book is not intended as a ſtandard for the order of any church of Chriſt. Should it be adopted as ſuch, the views of the writer would be thereby completely defeated. His deſign is to excite his brethren in Chriſt to ſtudy the Scriptures on this and every other ſubject, and to appeal only to the law and to the teſtimony. In ſo far as it produces this effect, his object will be gained. He cordially adopts the language of Mr Ainſworth; 'If any places (viz. of God's word) be alleged amiſs or impertinent, or things gathered otherwiſe than the text will afford, (as through my ignorance or unheedineſs, no doubt, many may be;) I humbly aſk pardon for the ſame, both of God and his people; and do deſire the reader not to rely upon my judgment in any thing, but as himſelf, by the wiſdom of God's Spirit, ſhall ſee agreeable unto truth. For, if any ſhall build up-

on my words, without ſure ground from the law of the Lord, he ſhall firſt offend God, who hath given his Scriptures by divine inſpiration, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. to teach and perſuade all truth, to reprove and correct all error; to inſtruct in righteouſneſs, and make men perfect unto every good work: he ſhall injure me alſo, who have written theſe things to be tried and examined by Chriſt's law, not to be accepted for a law; and he ſhall injure his own ſoul, by relying upon the word of frail man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, which cannot eſtabliſh the heart, nor aſſure the conſcience in any thing. Let, therefore, the graſs wither, and the flower fade, for it is the word of our God that ſhall ſtand for ever!' Iſa. xl. 8.*

The Author hopes that criticiſms or remarks, however juſt, on the manner or ſtyle in which he has written, will not be conſidered as reaſons for neglecting what is here laid before the Public.

He now commends this attempt to place the truth before the minds of Chriſtians, to that powerful influence which can produce attention, baniſh prejudice, and work effectually and practically againſt all oppoſition!

EDINBURGH, *June* 4. 1805.

* Preface to Ainſworth's Treatiſe on the Communion of Saints. p. lxxviii. See his two Treatiſes re-publiſhed at Edinburgh, 1789.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Page.

On the importance of attending to every part of the word of God, - - 1

CHAPTER II.

There is reaſon to preſume, that the New Teſtament contains inſtructions concerning every part of the worſhip and conduct of Chriſtian ſocieties, as well as concerning the faith and practice of individuals, - 17

CHAPTER III.

All Chriſtians are bound to obſerve the univerſal and approved practices of the firſt churches recorded in Scripture.

Sect. I.—Arguments to prove this, - 36

Sect. II.—Objections anſwered, - 55

Sect. III.—A more particular conſideration of the objection, that there are ſome practices of the apoſtolic churches, which churches profeſſing to follow their example do not obſerve. The inſtances conſidered of the community of goods in the

Pag.

church of Jerusalem; of the alleged daily observance of the Lord's supper; of congregational love-feasts; washing the saints feet; the kiss of love; and the apostle Paul's vow, Acts xviii. 18. - 79

CHAPTER IV.

On the causes of the diversity of opinion among Christians respecting social worship and ordinances, and the evils arising from it, - - - 101

CHAPTER V.

On the constitution of the apostolic churches.

Sect. I.—The apostolic churches were single congregations, - - 129

Sect. II.—Objections considered, viz. *church* denotes in Scripture elders or rulers;—church at Jerusalem too numerous to meet in one assembly;—application from the church at Antioch to that at Jerusalem, Acts xv.;—the alleged want of union and co-operation in single and independent assemblies, - - 143

CHAPTER VI.

On the character of those who composed the apostolic churches.

Sect. I.—They were such as gave evidence of being true believers, - 173

Pag.

Sect. II.—Objections considered from 2 Pet. ii. and iii. Jude 4. 12. 16. &c.; the seven churches addressed, Rev. ii. and iii.; the presence of Judas at the Lord's supper; the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24.; remarks on this by President Edwards and Mr Gisborne; extracts from Dr Erskine's account of the character and privileges of the apostolic churches, in reply to these and the like objections, 187

Sect. III.—Observations on the admission of members into the churches of Christ, 206

CHAPTER VII.

Of the offices in the apostolic churches.

Sect. I.—Of the extraordinary offices, and the rule to distinguish these from the stated; of apostles, prophets, evangelists; of the stated offices, elders or bishops; their identity, duties, qualifications, election; all apostolic churches had a presbytery, or more than one elder; no foundation for the distinction between preachers and ruling elders; of the different talents of elders as explanatory of this; right of all elders to support from the church, and of their duty to afford it; of widows, and their duties; of deacons—not all of one sex, - - - - 214

Sect. II.—Further remarks on the plurality

Pag.

of paſtors, and the diverſity of gifts among them, and on their duties; on the ſubmiſſion and obedience of the church to their paſtors; on the duties of deacons, 250

CHAPTER VIII.

Of ordination, - - 268

CHAPTER IX.

Of the ordinances obſerved by the apoſtolic churches.

Sect. I.—Of the apoſtles doctrine; of preaching, teaching, exhortation, and reading, 282

Sect. II.—Of the fellowſhip or contribution, 289

Sect. III.—Of the breaking of the bread, or the Lord's ſupper, - - 292

Sect. IV.—Of prayer and praiſe, 302

Sect. V.—Of Faſting, - 304

Sect. VI.—Sanctification of the firſt day of the Week, - - 308

Sect. VII.—Of baptiſm, - 313

CHAPTER X.

Of the diſcipline of the apoſtolic churches, 341

CHAPTER XI.

Of forbearance, - - 370

CHAPTER XII.

Of ſchiſm and hereſy, 384

CHAPTER XIII. *Pag.*

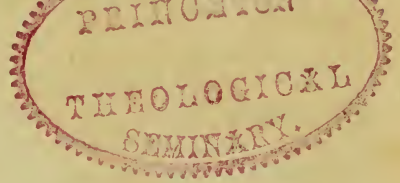
Excellence of the plan laid down in the New Teſtament for the ſocial worſhip of Chriſtians, and the advantages ariſing from obſerving it, - - 395

CHAPTER XIV.

Hints concerning the evils ariſing from neglect of the ſeparation from the world, enjoined by Jeſus Chriſt in ſocial worſhip and ordinances, - - 408

CONCLUSION, - - 459

INDEX, - - 481



ERRATA.

Page 76. line 14. *dele* to
86. note, l. 1. *for* magno *read* magna
122. l. 17. *for* or *read* and
126. l. 6. *dele* it
142. l. 17. *for* or *read* nor
179. note, l. 1. *for* σωζωμενης *read* σωζομενης
258. l. 5. *for* rule in *read* rule over
265. l. 13. *after* as *read* it
269. l. 6. *dele* the miniſtry
407. running title, *for* SOSIAL *read* SOCIAL
437. l. 15. *after* any *dele* other

A

VIEW

OF

SOCIAL WORSHIP,

&c.

PROPERTY OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CHAPTER I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING TO EVERY PART OF THE WORD OF GOD.

THE facred Scriptures contain a complete revelation of the will of God. They inform us of the character of God, and of the duties we owe to him. This revelation was made by degrees, but has been long ſince completed, and the canon of Scripture finally cloſed. The utmoſt perſpicuity is united with the greateſt brevity in this wonderful book. Being the work of God, it poſſeſſes the perfection of its Author, and is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto every good work.

Chriſtians regard the Bible with veneration:

they are jealous of its honour, and juſtly eſteem it to be the foundation of all their hopes. On the truth of what is there delivered, they reſt their eternal all; and, truſting in the Saviour whom it reveals, they are enabled, in poverty and ſickneſs, in affliction and death, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Every Chriſtian owns he is blind, ignorant, and liable to err at every ſtep; he conſiders the word of God to be a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path; yet too many imagine, that every part of this revelation does not demand ſcrupulous regard. Some things which it contains, they judge to be indifferent and unimportant; nay, they do not heſitate to affirm, that attention to theſe diverts the mind from fundamental truths. Surely good men are not aware of the conſequences of ſuch an opinion. It repreſents Scripture to be inconſiſtent, and Chriſt's kingdom to be divided againſt itſelf, while it is calculated to produce diſregard to every precept which may be contrary to our inclinations. This ſentiment is highly diſhonourable to God; it tends to diminiſh our regard for his authority. The more we reſpect any perſon, and the more exalted he is, the more minute attention we pay to whatever he ſays. A hint of his will is ſufficient from a king to a loyal and affectionate ſubject. Muſt we not then, entertain inadequate views of the wiſdom of God, when we think that any part of his holy book may be overlooked?

The Bible is one consistent and united whole. Every part is connected; the most minute precepts are adapted to strengthen the influence of the most important doctrines. It is completely different from the systems of men. Even in those which display the greatest human wisdom, we sometimes find inconsistencies; but in the revelation of God these have no existence. So great is the harmony, and so intimate the connection between all parts of the word of God, that ignorance of one part always leads to error in another. Thus men having forsaken the Scriptures in regard to modes of worship and church order, soon began to imagine that they were deficient in many other respects, and that these defects must be supplied by tradition, and the authority of the church. On the other hand, right views of one subject contained in the sacred volume, tend to correct our mistakes on other subjects. It is indeed possible to be much occupied about external order, while we neglect the weightier matters of the law, but this does not arise from minutely attending to whatever God has revealed, but from doing so in an improper and partial manner. We may not only ruin our souls while attending to external matters, but we may perplex ourselves about the greatest and most fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and wrest them also to our own destruction.

It is the will of God that his people should be holy. To promote holiness he has given us a

revelation, that we, believing his exceeding great and precious promiſes, might be partakers of a divine nature. This, his grand end, is never for a moment loſt ſight of in any precept he delivers; and if we loſe ſight of it, we can derive little benefit from any of the ordinances which he has enjoined. To view the matter thus is ſurely more to the honour of revelation, than to ſuppoſe that we beſt ſhew our regard for its authority by overlooking ſuch parts as we judge unneceſſary. But what ſhall we ſay of thoſe, who imagine that a diligent examination of the order eſtabliſhed in the firſt churches by Chriſt and his apoſtles, would render them leſs ſpiritual, and obſtruct their growth in grace! This is downright antinomianiſm. It puts the means in oppoſition to the end. The Scriptures, however, are wreſted to ſupport this ſentiment. The kingdom of God, ſay they, is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt—aſſuredly: and therefore, ſay the Quakers, it is abſurd to baptize or adminiſter the Lord's ſupper. This is carrying the argument to its proper length; but it is not conſiſtent in thoſe who condemn ſuch conduct, to adduce this and ſimilar paſſages of Scripture, as a proof that it is of little importance what external order the churches adopt.

It is freely granted, that every part of divine truth is not in itſelf equally important, although all is ſanctioned by the ſame authority. There are ſome doctrines, without the knowledge of

which we cannot be ſaved. There are others of which good men have been comparatively ignorant; but ſtill every doctrine is important. By ignorance of one, we, in ſome meaſure, loſe the beautiful harmony of divine truth. Our reſemblance to God bears an exact proportion to our real knowledge of him. Thus the apoſtle prays for the Coloſſians, "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full aſſurance of *underſtanding*, to the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt," Col. ii. 2. No man is perfect in knowledge. None can ſay that in this he has attained, or is already perfect; and if any man ſay that he is ſatisfied with the meaſure of his knowledge, provided he could but grow in holineſs, he manifeſts great ignorance of the way of ſalvation revealed in Scripture, where growth in knowledge and in grace are always declared to be inſeparable. Paul counted all things loſs for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Chriſt, and deſired to *know* him and the power of his reſurrection, Phil. iii. 8. 10.

Amongſt the men of the world, a man's creed is thought of little conſequence, provided his practice be good. A deceived heart turns them aſide. They do not perceive the connection between juſt views of the character of God, and delight in doing his will. They conſider the great doctrines of the goſpel to be merely ſpecu-

lative points, on which good men may, and do entertain different opinions. They justify their indifference about these, by their dislike of controversy. They affirm that zeal about such matters sours the temper, and often disorders the intellect. The man, on the contrary, who is taught of God, understands that true holiness is necessarily connected with the belief of the truth; that the whole of revealed truth is practical, and effectually works in those who believe. He therefore earnestly contends for the faith once delivered to the saints, and on account of his attachment to that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, he is branded as a bigot by the world. How much does the conduct of some Christians towards their brethren resemble this! They judge it unimportant what outward order is adopted in worship, provided we hold fast the great truths of God, and follow after holiness. They do not perceive the influence the one has upon the other; that both are enjoined by the same authority; and that while we do the one, the other is not to be left undone. I would not for a moment be thought to put the most important doctrines of the gospel on a footing with order or modes of worship. The man who worships God in spirit and in truth, and he only, shall be accepted: but order and modes of worship may, and must have much influence in promoting spirituality, and in fixing our minds on the object of worship, or leading them away to what will prove hurtful to our

ſouls; yet are we told, that attention to the Scriptures on theſe matters tends to diſtract the mind, and only leads to diſputation and controverſy.

If, then, we would pay proper reſpect to the revelation with which we are favoured, let us attend to the whole of it. The more we do ſo, the more ſhall we perceive the wiſdom of God in every part. We ſhall experience the efficacy of the belief of the truth, in ſanctifying our minds, and in making us delight in holineſs, while by attending to the various ordinances delivered to the churches, the belief and influence of the truth will be greatly promoted. I would ſay to thoſe who are afraid of attending to all Chriſt's commandments, leſt their minds be rendered leſs ſpiritual, as Philip ſaid to Nathanael, "Come and ſee." External matters may indeed be contended for by carnal men, deſtitute of the truth, but ſtill they are a part of that Scripture which cannot be broken; and although they may be perverted and wreſted by the ungodly to their own deſtruction, they are admirably ſuited to promote the benefit and comfort of the humble follower of Jeſus.

The loſs we may ſuffer by neglecting any part of the revelation of God, is incalculable. Harvey was led to the diſcovery of the circulation of the blood, by conſidering what might be the purpoſe of valves in the veins, which, opening by preſſure on the one ſide, and cloſing by preſſure on the other, admitted the blood to flow only in one direction. He was convinced that this eco-

nomy anſwered ſome important purpoſe; he knew not what it might be, but attributing this to his own ignorance, and perſuaded that nature did nothing in vain, he perſevered in his reſearches, and his ſucceſs juſtified the ſoundneſs of the principle he had aſſumed.

Some might ridicule Harvey for ſuppoſing, that attention to ſuch minute parts of the human frame could lead to any uſeful diſcovery, or ſalutary practice; they might urge him to attend to the ſtructure of the more important parts of the body: but they were ſilenced by the event, and the practice of medicine is now greatly influenced, and the welfare of mankind promoted, by this important diſcovery. If Chriſtians entertained the ſame confidence, that whatever the wiſdom of God has ſeen fit to record in the lively oracles, is deſigned for our inſtruction, and that obedience to every precept is calculated to promote holineſs, they would reap much advantage and edification from it, and it would have an equally ſalutary effect on their ſouls.

It is not indeed eſſential to ſalvation that we ſhould know all which God has revealed. We are all, alas! imperfect in knowledge; but ſurely it is neceſſary to ſalvation, and the inſeparable effect of believing the goſpel, that we *deſire* to know whatever God has revealed. It is undoubtedly inconſiſtent with the ſpirit of a Chriſtian, to be indifferent about any part of the will of God. Let it be moſt carefully obſerved, that according to the

Scriptures we can only have full evidence that we ſhall perſevere, and conſequently that we ſhall be ſaved, when we give all diligence to grow *in knowledge*, as well as in faith, fortitude, patience, and godlineſs, 2 Pet. i. 5. 11. *It is alſo eſſential to ſalvation*, that we obſerve and profeſs whatever we do know to be the will of Chriſt. If, from regard to human authority, worldly intereſt, or from that indolence which prevents men from ſearching matters to the bottom, we neglect any of his commandments, alleging that they are minute or unimportant, we ſin preſumptuouſly, our hearts muſt condemn us, and God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. A good ſubject never thinks of violating human laws, under pretence of their being of little conſequence. This would juſtly be deemed an impeachment of the wiſdom of the legiſlature by whoſe authority they were enacted, and would, in every caſe, ſubject him to puniſhment: and ſhall Chriſtians treat the laws of Jeſus with leſs reſpect, the infringement of any one of which infers condemnation? James ii. 10.

Our extreme proneneſs to error, in regard to religion, is alſo an important reaſon why we ſhould diligently attend to every part of the word of God. This diſpoſition is acknowledged by all who admit the corruption of human nature. The wiſeſt men have always diſplayed their folly in religion, when unenlightened by divine revelation. Many, even with the Scriptures in their

hands, and these, too, persons appearing eminently pious and holy, have, by forsaking the Scriptures, and adopting human traditions, fallen into the grossest absurdities. Many such, I doubt not, are now in heaven; but surely their history teaches us to give heed to the word of God, which we are certain cannot mislead us. A supposed latitude in Scripture respecting what were called circumstantials, led the way to all the abominations of Popery; and we ought not to neglect the admonition, to prove *all* things, and to hold fast that which is good, especially as we have such an example before our eyes.

In consequence of this natural perverseness and proneness to err, we are warned in Scripture, if we will be wise, to become fools that we may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18.; that is, instead of being guided by our own reasonings, we must submit, as fools, to be taught of God. We are also assured, that whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in nowise enter therein, Luke xviii. 17. When we receive with reverence the whole of the word of God, applying each part of it to the use for which it was designed, considering it all to be highly important, we resemble a little child sitting at the feet of its father; but when we take upon us to decide what we shall receive as binding, and what we shall neglect as unsuitable to our circumstances, we discover a very opposite temper. We could not admit a principle which will lead us into

greater temptation to conformity with the world in matters of religion, and, by improper compliances, to do away the offence of the croſs. Paul, by preaching circumciſion, might have avoided perſecution, Gal. v. 11.; but although circumciſion was nothing in itſelf, 1 Cor. vii. 19. yet he would not give place by ſubjection to any one, no, not for an hour, in matters of religion, that the truth of the goſpel (the goſpel in its ſimplicity) might continue in the churches which he had planted.

If we once admit the principle of adapting order and modes of worſhip to our circumſtances, inſtead of adopting thoſe, and only thoſe, which are recorded in Scripture, it is difficult to ſay where we ſhall ſtop. Are all ordinances and modes of worſhip indifferent? No Chriſtian will ſay ſo. Can a preciſe line be drawn, beyond which we muſt not go in deviating from Scripture? This is impoſſible. To receive whatever the Scripture contains, is a clear and preciſe rule, capable of being reduced to practice, wherever men are favoured with revelation; but once depart from this, and we are all uncertainty; our practice cannot be in faith, and therefore cannot be acceptable to God, Rom. xiv. 23.

The arguments uſed on this ſubject equally prove the impropriety of adopting any practice in religion, not ſanctioned by Scripture. Indeed the principle held by ſome, that we may lawfully ſet aſide ſome precepts formerly delivered to the churches, is always accompanied with a ſuppoſed

neceſſity of ſupplying *deficiencies*. Theſe principles ſtand or fall together. They are equally pernicious. And although men profeſs to limit their application to things indifferent, they wear a moſt unfavourable aſpect on the perfection, fulneſs, and authority of the word of God. But what are theſe indifferent things? Let us hear Mr Locke on the ſubject. 'Things in their own 'nature indifferent, cannot, by any human autho-'rity, be made any part of the worſhip of God, 'for this very reaſon, becauſe they are indiffe-'rent; for ſince indifferent things are not capa-'ble, by any virtue of their own, to propitiate 'the Deity, no human power or authority can 'confer on them ſo much dignity and excellency 'as to enable them to do it. In the common 'affairs of life, that uſe of indifferent things which 'God has not forbidden, is free and lawful; and 'therefore in thoſe things human authority has 'place. But it is not ſo in matters of religion. 'Things indifferent are no otherwiſe lawful in 'the worſhip of God, than as they are inſtituted 'by God himſelf; and as he, by ſome poſitive 'command, has ordained them to be made a part 'of that worſhip which he will vouchſafe to ac-'cept of at the hands of poor ſinful men: nor 'when an incenſed Deity ſhall aſk us, Who has 'required theſe, or ſuch like things, at your 'hands? will it be enough to anſwer him, that 'the magiſtrate commanded them. If civil juriſ-, diction extended thus far, what might not law-

'fully be introduced into religion? What hodge-
'podge of ceremonies, what ſuperſtitious inven-
'tions, built upon the magiſtrate's authority,
'might not, againſt conſcience, be impoſed upon
'the worſhippers of God? For the greateſt part
'of theſe ceremonies and ſuperſtitions conſiſts in
'the religious uſe of ſuch things as are in their
'own nature indifferent; nor are they ſinful upon
'any other account than becauſe God is not the
'author of them. The ſprinkling of water, and
'the uſe of bread and wine, are both in their own
'nature, and in the ordinary occaſions of life, al-
'together indifferent. Will any man therefore
'ſay, that theſe things could have been introdu-
'ced into religion, and made a part of divine
'worſhip, if not by divine inſtitution? If any
'human authority or civil power could have done
'this, why might it not alſo enjoin the eating of
'fiſh, and drinking of ale, in the holy banquet, as
'a part of divine worſhip? Why not the ſprink-
'ling of the blood of beaſts in churches, and ex-
'piations by water or fire, and abundance more
'of this kind? But theſe things, how indifferent
'ſoever they be in common uſes, when they come
'to be annexed unto divine worſhip, without di-
'vine authority, they are as abominable to God
'as the ſacrifice of a dog. And why a dog ſo
'abominable? What difference is there between
'a dog and a goat, in reſpect of the divine na-
'ture, equally and infinitely diſtant from all affi-
'nity with matter, unleſs it be that God required

'the uſe of the one in his worſhip, and not of the 'other? We ſee therefore that indifferent things, 'how much ſoever they be under the power of 'the civil magiſtrate, yet cannot upon that pre-'tence be introduced into religion, and impoſed 'upon religious aſſemblies, becauſe, in the wor-'ſhip of God, they wholly ceaſe to be indifferent. 'He that worſhips God, does it with deſign to 'pleaſe him and procure his favour; but that 'cannot be done by him who, upon the command 'of another, offers unto God that which he knows 'will be diſpleaſing to him, becauſe not com-'manded by himſelf. This is not to pleaſe God, 'or appeaſe his wrath, but willingly and know-'ingly to provoke him by a manifeſt contempt; 'which is a thing abſolutely repugnant to the 'nature and end of worſhip *.' This reaſoning reſpects the authority of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion; but it proves with equal force, that all will-worſhip, whatever is not appointed by God, is improper, and that we ought therefore to receive the Scriptures, and nothing elſe, as binding in the worſhip of God. Yet are there ſome pious men who, even without inquiry, would ſet aſide thoſe parts of Scripture which ſeem to interfere with their own practice, and would repreſent attention to them, as calculated to divert the mind from the weightier matters of the law. Before we act on ſuch a principle, we ought diligently to examine whether we

* Locke's Letter on Toleration, p. 109,—115. Glaſg. edit.

are warranted to do so. But the subject will not bear examination, and, as if conscious of the badness of the cause they have espoused, some good men, in certain situations, discourage all inquiry in such matters, and are ever deprecating attention to what they call non-essentials. I well recollect the effect this had upon my own mind. When I turned my attention to infant baptism, and had scruples on that subject, instead of hearing scriptural arguments alleged for the practice, I heard good men ridiculing the idea of so much attention being paid to it. This had almost convinced me, that there was nothing material to be said in its favour.

Upon the whole, it seems evident, that it highly becomes us to attend to every part of the word of God. Every thing we there meet with is important. Were Scripture more studied under this impression, there would be a rapid progress among Christians, both in knowledge, in uniformity of sentiment and religious observances, and in the practice of holiness. It is high time to shake off that temper of mind which indispose us for the investigation of truth; which leads us to cherish the prejudices we have received from our fathers, and which renders us unwilling to go beyond them on any subject*. This has a shew of humility, but in fact it arises from sloth,

* A Burgher Elder lately observed in the Associate Synod, that the use we ought to make of our forefathers is, to stand on their shoulders, and to try how much farther we could see.

prejudice, and indifference about divine truth. We ought, indeed, cautiouſly to avoid being toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; but if our ſteadineſs do not ariſe from regard to the authority of God; if it do not proceed from diligent attention to his word, it no more deſerves the name of ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith, than the parſimony of a miſer deſerves the name of economy.

I conclude this chapter with reminding my readers of the ſolemn warning which cloſes the revelation of God. It demands the ſerious attention of thoſe who do not hold themſelves bound to be implicitly directed, in all things, by the word of God: "I teſtify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man ſhall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God ſhall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." This declaration is peculiarly ſuitable, not only as the concluſion of the New Teſtament, but of that part of it, in particular, which eſpecially expoſes to our view, and our abhorrence, the abominations of falſe religion, under the influence of which Chriſtians have entered into forbidden and corrupt alliance with the world, a ſin which is ſtyled, in the figurative language of that book, *committing fornication with the kings of the earth*, and have

thus made the word of God void by corrupt traditions. The warning, I doubt not, is given chiefly to prevent the Scriptures from being mutilated; but it also admonishes all to tremble at God's word; to receive it as a complete and consistent revelation, to be embraced and respected in all its parts; and to beware lest, through indolence, or compliance with the opinions of men, we introduce distinctions founded on our own ignorance, and thus put asunder what God has joined.

CHAPTER II.

THERE IS REASON TO PRESUME, THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTAINS INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING EVERY PART OF THE WORSHIP AND CONDUCT OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES, AS WELL AS CONCERNING THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF INDIVIDUALS.

THE Lord Jesus, in writing to the church of Thyatira, says, "I will put upon you no other burden; but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come," Rev. ii. 24, 25. This exactly agrees with the awful denunciation, quoted above, against those who add to or take from the word of God. Both evidently imply, that

nothing beſides what is contained in Scripture is to be binding on our conſciences; and ſurely it is abſurd to introduce into religion what is *not* a matter of conſcience.

One part of the perfection of Scripture conſiſts in its being completely adapted to the character and circumſtances of men. We obſerved, that from the conſideration of our proneneſs to err, we ought ſcrupulouſly to adhere to the directions of God. This part of our character alſo affords a ſtrong preſumption that God has given us a full and diſtinct rule, which may at once guide the humble inquirer, and render thoſe inexcuſeable who, refuſing to hearken to him, preſume to walk in their own counſels. Had man been leſs perverſe, the ſame preciſion would not have been neceſſary; but as we muſt ſuit our inſtructions to the capacity and character of the pupil, ſo has God, we may preſume, condeſcended to deal with us. Now, whether we conſider the blindneſs and folly of men in matters of religion, as repreſented in Scripture, or as demonſtrated by facts, the neceſſity of a clear and preciſe rule will evidently appear.

This neceſſity is further evident, from the influence which good or bad laws muſt always have upon ſociety. A great part of the worſhip of Chriſtians is ſocial. One chief deſign of the goſpel is, to enlarge the affections towards mankind, eſpecially towards thoſe who belong to Jeſus Chriſt. The happineſs and proſperity of any

ſociety depends, in a great meaſure, on the laws by which it is governed. A church of Chriſt is a ſociety, and without proper laws it cannot ſubſiſt. 'Foraſmuch as no ſociety, how free ſoever, or upon whatſoever ſlight occaſion inſtituted, (whether of philoſophers for learning, of merchants for commerce, or of men of leiſure for mutual converſation and diſcourſe), no church or company, I ſay, can in the leaſt ſubſiſt and hold together, but will preſently diſſolve and break to pieces, unleſs it be regulated by ſome laws, and the members all conſent to obſerve ſome order: place and time of meeting muſt be agreed on; rules for admitting and excluding members muſt be eſtabliſhed; diſtinction of officers, and putting things into regular courſe, and ſuch like, cannot be omitted *.' Whoever makes theſe laws ought to be very well acquainted, not only with the nature and deſign of a Chriſtian church, but with thoſe circumſtances which, through the corruption of human nature, may ariſe to fruſtrate the deſign of the aſſociation. Unleſs he poſſeſs this knowledge in a very great degree, his laws will aſſuredly claſh with the ſpirit of the inſtitution, and, inſtead of repreſſing, will be likely to produce confuſion. Now, where ſhall we find the man, ſince the days of the apoſtles, poſſeſſed of ſuch an extenſive acquaintance with the nature of Chriſt's kingdom, of ſuch minute knowledge of the human heart, and, at the ſame time, ſo uninfluenced by local

* Locke on Toleration, p. 42,—44.

prejudice, as to be capable of eſtabliſhing laws which ſhall tend, in the greateſt degree, to repreſs corruption amongſt Chriſtians in their aſſociated capacity, and yet to lay their conſciences under no unneceſſary reſtraint? If it be alleged, that I have repreſented the laws for the government of the church of Chriſt, as requiring more preciſion than is in fact neceſſary, I would appeal to the effect of good or bad laws on civil ſociety. What a difference is there between the ſtate of this country, and that of Spain or of Turkey! Does not this ariſe, in a great degree, from the ſuperior excellence of the laws by which we are governed? But laws are ſtill more important in an aſſociation wholly deſigned to promote religion. God may be much diſhonoured by the ſtate of the heart, although this be not diſcovered by actions; and laws which are intended to promote holineſs of heart, require to be framed with much more wiſdom than ſuch as only extend to outward conduct.

As religion is a matter of revelation, in regard to which we are conſtantly cautioned againſt leaning to our own underſtanding, and exhorted to become like little children—as the purpoſe of the formation of churches is purely religious—and as good or bad laws ſo eminently tend to promote or to obſtruct the proſperity of all ſocieties, it is ſurely moſt reaſonable to expect, that we ſhall find in Scripture an univerſal rule for the direction of Chriſtians in their aſſociated character.

To these considerations let us add, God's declared abhorrence of will-worship. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of those who are about him. To introduce any of *our own* devices into his worship, is not only contrary to that reverence which he uniformly enjoins, but is marked with his decided disapprobation. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men: Therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid," Isa. xxix. 13, 14. Here, departure in heart from God is connected with worshipping him in ways of human invention, and the Lord Jesus, quoting this same passage, assures us, that if our fear be taught by the commandments of men, our worship is vain, Matt. xv. 9. The same truth is enforced by the apostle, when he warns Titus, i. 14. not only against Jewish fables *, but against *commandments of men that turn from the truth.* This is a maxim of universal application in religion. 'This pride and folly of men was that which lost

* These Jewish fables deserved the name of things indifferent, much more than many others to which the term has in modern times been applied; yet against these Titus is warned.

all knowledge of God in the world, and all obedience unto him. The ten commandments are but a tranſcript of the light and law of nature. The firſt of theſe required that God, the only true God, the Creator and Governor of all, ſhould be acknowledged, worſhipped, believed in, and obeyed. And the ſecond was, that we ſhould not make unto ourſelves any image or repreſentation of him. Whatever he would do himſelf, yet he ſtrictly forbids that we ſhould make any ſuch unto ourſelves. And here began the apoſtaſy of the world from God. They did not abſolutely reject him, and ſo caſt off the firſt fundamental precept of the law of nature, but they ſubmitted not unto his wiſdom and authority in the next, which was evidently educed from it. They would make images and repreſentations of him unto themſelves. And by this invention of their own, they firſt diſhonoured him, and then forſook him, giving themſelves up unto the rule and ſervice of the devil. Wherefore, as the way that God in infinite wiſdom found out for the repreſentation of himſelf unto us, was the only means of recovery from the firſt apoſtaſy; the way found out by men unto the ſame end, was the great means of caſting the generality of mankind unto the fartheſt degree of a new apoſtaſy from God, whereof our nature is capable. And of the ſame kind will all our contrivances, in what belongs unto his worſhip and glory, be found to

be, though unto us they may appear both ſpecious and neceſſary *.'

If any ſhall ſay that the *worſhip* of God is indeed fixed, and from that appointed mode we are not to deviate, but that other matters, in regard to the order of churches, are left undetermined—let them give us, if they can, from the word of God, a more preciſe ſtandard for our worſhip, than can be given for the conſtitution of a church, the character of church members, the ordinance of diſcipline to be obſerved in a church, &c. But how much contention and bloodſhed has ariſen about modes of worſhip! How many, by penal laws, have been compelled, againſt their conſciences, to comply with modes and forms which they deteſted! There are few things in religion over which men have claimed and exerciſed more power, than in the moſt ſolemn ordinances: but every act of a church of Chriſt, ought to be an act of worſhip, an act of obedience to the authority of the Head of the church; and whatever they do in their aſſociated capacity, ought not only to be done from regard to his authority, but as actually in his preſence; for he hath ſaid, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them."

It is ſaid alſo, that the Scriptures chiefly regard the ſtate of the heart. This is moſt certain. I do not argue for any one regulation being con-

* Owen on the Perſon and Glory of Chriſt, p. 101, 102. Ed. edit. 1800.

tained in the word of God, which is not designed or calculated to promote holiness of heart; but if matters of outward order are not altogether unimportant; if they may be framed so as to guard us, in some measure, against temptation, and to promote reverence to God and love to man, it affords a strong presumption, that the word of God contains full directions respecting them.

It is certainly proper that our religion should not be loaded with unnecessary ceremonies. Now we know how very prone man is to multiply these. The natural effect of this is to divert the mind from real religion, and to harden the wicked in their infidelity. The regulations of man in religion, always useless, are frequently in direct opposition to the will of God. This arises from his natural perverseness and ignorance; and of this we have a notable instance in the conduct of the Jews. Not satisfied with what God had revealed, they proceeded to supply deficiencies, and by one of the laws which they devised, they completely set aside one of God's commandments, Matt. xv. 3. This was not intentional. They still professed the greatest reverence for God's law; but their folly prevented them from perceiving, that as the Scripture could not be broken, as nothing superfluous was to be found in it, so neither was there any deficiency to supply; that when at a loss for the path of duty, they ought to study it diligently, with prayer to God for wisdom to understand it.

The abuſes which have actually taken place, afford a very ſtrong preſumption that Scripture does not countenance that latitude in matters of external order, for which many contend. One deviation from the apoſtolic practice took place after another, till the man of ſin was ſeated on his throne in the temple of God, aſſuming the power of changing times and laws. Indeed, where this awful apoſtaſy is foretold in Scripture, adherence to the apoſtolic practice is immediately enjoined in the moſt particular manner. The apoſtle having noticed this dreadful falling away, and having characterized the man of ſin and his deluded followers, who, not receiving the love of the truth, ſhould be given up to the groſſeſt deluſion, contraſts the character of the Theſſalonian church with theirs: He proceeds, "Therefore, brethren, ſtand faſt; and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epiſtle." Here he evidently enforces regard to what *he* had taught, as the ſure and only preſervative from this dreadful calamity. So long as the authority and the injunctions of the apoſtles were regarded as ſacred, an effectual ſtop was put to any manifeſt defection; but as ſoon as Chriſtians aſſumed the principle, that circumſtances warranted a departure from their plan, anarchy, confuſion, and irreligion, advanced with rapid ſtrides, and ſoon covered the world with the groſſeſt darkneſs.

It is moſt evident, that the papal ſyſtem could

never have arisen, had the word of God been deemed a sufficient, indispensable, and permanent rule respecting the order of churches of Christ. It is no less evident that, considering the folly of human nature, it was hardly possible but gross corruptions must necessarily have arisen, if matters of order were left, in a good measure, vague and undetermined. We may therefore reasonably presume, that the Lord did not leave a breach in his fold so easily accessible to the enemy of his people, nor expose them to such inroads as he might make by means of it. Of one thing we are sure, that they would have been far less exposed to these by having a determinate rule. Dr Campbell, in his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, traces the gradual corruption of the churches, and points out many cases, in which it might be very plausibly supposed that good men, while designing to promote religion, in fact led the way to all subsequent corruptions. We certainly know that the corruption did take place. Now, whether is it more reasonable to conclude, that this proceeded from neglecting a rule contained in the Scriptures of truth, or that in consequence of the Scriptures containing no such rule, men were almost unavoidably led into the snare of the devil?

A further presumption that the New Testament contains a complete system of regulations for Christian worship, arises from God's dealings towards men in every age. We have nothing recorded which leads us to suppose, that ever

God left his worſhippers to their own diſcretion, reſpecting the manner of worſhipping him. In every age, the ſubſtance of his law to his people was, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." But their obedience to his commandments was ever the proof of their love. Theſe commandments not only reſpected their duty to men, but the manner in which God was to be worſhipped, and what ceremonies were to be obſerved by them. He ſet apart the ſeventh day from the beginning, and although all days were in themſelves indifferent, we cannot ſuppoſe that any who regarded his authority would have changed this for another. It is true, we cannot ſpeak particularly of the mode of worſhip before the law, becauſe the account we have of every thing of that date is ſo very ſhort. But we know God inſtituted ſacrifices, and was highly diſpleaſed when there was a deviation from thoſe which he had eſtabliſhed; as in the caſe of Cain, who, inſtead of God's appointed offering, brought the firſt fruits of his ground. Before the flood there was a diſtinction between clean and unclean beaſts, Gen. vii. 2. which could only ariſe from the revealed will of God. Noah, and all the patriarchs, evidently appear to have built an altar wherever they offered ſacrifices, and we find God, on one occaſion, commanding Jacob to build one, Gen. xxxv. 1. Now this muſt have ariſen either from an altar being a human invention, which was thus ſanctioned of God, or that it was his own appoint-

ment. God promiſed to bleſs Iſaac, and multiply his ſeed, becauſe Abraham obeyed his voice, and kept his charge, his commandments, his ſtatutes, and his laws, Gen. xxvi. 5. which ſhews that God had delivered various ordinances to Abraham, although we are not informed of them.

The preciſion which was to be obſerved under the law is manifeſt. Every part of the ſocial worſhip of Iſrael was minutely pointed out; and we find that Moſes, who was charged with delivering the laws of God to the people, received the honourable teſtimony that "he was faithful in all his houſe." There was indeed one important reaſon for this preciſion, that all the ordinances were typical, and intended as a teſtimony of the truth of the goſpel; as well as to lead the mind of the pious Iſraelite to look for the accompliſhment of the promiſe made to Abraham. But the minuteneſs with which the ordinances of worſhip were delivered, was alſo intended to ſeparate Iſrael from the nations; not only to preſerve them from idolatry, but to prevent ſtrangers from incorporating with them. The types are now fulfilled, the ſhadows have paſſed away, and the ſubſtance is come. One reaſon for the minute directions given to regulate the worſhip of Iſrael, is therefore at an end. But although one cauſe of this preciſion has ceaſed, the other remains in full force. The Lord has warned his people as ſolemnly againſt conformity to, or union with the world, as he did Iſrael of old againſt mingling with the na-

tions. His language to them is not leſs pointed: "Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father to you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. "Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon," Luke xvi. 13. "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," Gal. v. 9. Now if, in order effectually to ſeparate Iſrael from the nations, ſuch preciſion in the conſtitution of the Jewiſh church and in their ordinances of worſhip were neceſſary, can we ſuppoſe, that when the ſame end was to be attained under the goſpel, no ſuch means were employed? If Moſes was faithful, as a *ſervant*, over God's houſe, Chriſt was faithful, as a *ſon*, over his own. He knew what was in man; his proneneſs to ſtart aſide from God, like a deceitful bow; the influence of proper laws in regulating the ſocial intercourſe of his people—and did he omit to deliver ſuch laws? or is his holy word ſealed up, and nothing preciſe and perſpicuous to be found on this ſubject? Although Iſrael muſt not admit idolaters into their communion, leſt they ſhould be drawn aſide, is it left to our diſcretion, whether the churches of Chriſt ſhall conſiſt of a mixed multitude, or of thoſe who give evidence of being members of his body, of his fleſh, and of his bones?

Few, I preſume, conſider themſelves ſufficiently

acquainted with the precise import of the latter part of Ezekiel's prophecy, to endeavour from thence to establish any particular mode of worship for the New Testament churches; yet that it refers to the times of the gospel, I suppose will be generally admitted. There is one passage which I shall just mention, which appears to me to intimate that God has delivered in Scripture a form for the New Testament churches, and that this form shall be understood and adopted. It is, Ezek. xliii. 10, 11. "Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." Mr Scott, in his notes on this passage, observes, 'This may be also referred to the times when the whole church shall be reformed according to the standard of Scripture; when all denominations of Christians shall discern by that light their deviations from the truth of God, in doctrine, discipline, worship and practice, repent of them, and attempt to rectify them; and this beginning of humiliation will make way for their more complete instruction in every part of the divine will.'

If this interpretation be juſt, and it ſeems to be ſo, then the Scriptures do contain a ſtandard of doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip, &c. and thoſe who do not at preſent humbly ſearch for it, are living in ſin. The teſtimony of the above author is the leſs ſuſpicious, as he is a miniſter of the church of England, and ſets out on this expoſition of the viſion of Ezekiel by obſerving, that 'it is vain to attempt laying down rules for church government, diſcipline, worſhip, &c. from ſuch an obſcure viſion.' *Notes on Ezek.* xl. ver. 1. With this ſentiment I fully agree; but I think the whole viſion, if it be allowed to refer to goſpel times, affords the ſtrongeſt preſumption that Chriſt has left a preciſe and determinate rule for the government of his people.

This ſuppoſition is much ſtrengthened by John's viſion, Rev. xi. 1, 2. in which there is a plain reference to the viſions of Ezekiel. The angel having given him a reed, commanded him to meaſure the temple of God and the altar, and them that worſhip therein; but the court which is without the temple, he was directed to leave out, and not to meaſure, for it was given unto the Gentiles. This denoted, ſays Mr Scott, 'that in the predicted period there would be a ſmall number, whoſe doctrine, worſhip, and behaviour, would bear meaſuring by the word of God.' Unleſs we ſuppoſe that the word of God contains a ſtandard for worſhip and diſcipline, as well as for doctrine, it is hard to conceive how the Chriſtian church

was capable of being meaſured under the repreſentation of the temple, yet none will doubt that it was ſo repreſented to John.

All agree that there are ſome ordinances expreſsly appointed in the church of Chriſt. If ſo, is it not a fair concluſion, that theſe, and theſe only, are to be obſerved. They are indeed few and ſimple, but they are quite ſufficient. We ſhall hereafter have occaſion to advert to the cauſes why they have not been deemed ſo.

None who have conſidered the ſubject will deny the great importance of unity of ſentiment among Chriſtians. I do not know a greater obſtacle to the ſpread of the goſpel in this country, than the variety of ſects and parties, or denominations, as they are too ſoftly called. This proves, I am perſuaded, a ſtumbling-block to many, and alſo tends to alienate the minds of Chriſtians from each other. Real Chriſtians are all indeed of one mind as to the great doctrines of the goſpel. They are all baptized by one Spirit into one body; and thus our Lord's prayer, John xvii. 21. has been ſo far anſwered in every age. But this unity is not obvious to ſuperficial obſervers, and our Lord mentions it, as the reaſon of his petition, "that the world may know that thou haſt ſent me." That there are certain features of character in all real believers, which conſtitute, ſo to ſpeak, a kind of family likeneſs, and which muſt, in ſome meaſure, be noticed by the world, is true; but how much more ſtriking would this be, if Chriſtians

were of one mind reſpecting worſhip and diſcipline, and every external obſervance.

Some have fondly hoped for a general agreement amongſt Chriſtians on theſe ſubjects; others think this of little conſequence, provided they love one another. But has not every one obſerved, how much difference of ſentiment on theſe ſubjects has tended to extinguiſh love? If then we admit, that the New Teſtament is not explicit on this ſubject; if we maintain that no preciſe ſtandard is there laid down; if we muſt accommodate ourſelves to the prejudices of people of different countries, all proſpect of agreement on one plan is at an end, and nothing is to be expected but perpetual diviſions. Jeſus Chriſt has not promiſed, that any prophet ſhall hereafter ariſe to ſupply what is deficient, and, inſtead of exhorting us to receive laws from man in regard to his worſhip, he hath once and again warned us againſt it. He has taught us indeed to be ſubject to magiſtrates, but this only reſpects the things of this life. "Call no man Father," ſays he, "on earth." But if Scripture contain a perfect ſtandard, nothing more is neceſſary to produce perfect harmony among Chriſtians, than diligently to inveſtigate the word of God in order to diſcover this, and then ſimply to embrace it. This, then, affords a very ſtrong preſumption, that Scripture does contain ſuch a ſtandard.

The importance of uniformity amongſt Chriſtians, is not only evident in itſelf, but has been

allowed in every age ſince the Reformation. Good men have lamented the differences which have ſubſiſted, and which have not only occaſioned ſtrife amongſt themſelves, but have alſo given infidels a handle to reject and to ridicule all religion. Various plans have been deviſed for promoting uniformity; but all theſe, as might be expected, have failed. Indeed the ſucceſs of ſuch plans was not in itſelf deſireable. It could only have taken place, by churches giving way to one another's prejudices. It is neceſſary, in common life, ſometimes to give up what we know to be our right, for the ſake of peace or ſome greater advantage. But ſuch conduct reſpecting religion is not countenanced in the word of God. Every one muſt be fully perſuaded in his own mind, and no evil is to be done that good may come. We muſt by no means encroach on the liberty given to every church to walk according to their own light. If we endeavour to model one church after the example of another now exiſting, we ſhall make little progreſs unleſs authority be employed, and in this caſe our zeal is not according to knowledge, our weapons are carnal. But if a model exiſt in the New Teſtament, by which all churches ought to be regulated; if each be occupied in imitating this, they will gradually approach nearer to each other; and thus the numberleſs ſects and parties which diſhonour the religion of Jeſus, will be at an end. When a number of children are taught to write by one maſter,

we expect to see a resemblance in their handwriting. This naturally arises from each copying the writing of the master, to whom all look up; but what progress could be expected if they were employed in copying from each other, or in quarrelling who wrote best.

These different arguments afford, when considered singly, a very strong presumption that the Scripture contains instructions with regard to every part of the social worship and conduct of Christians; but when taken in connection, they seem to warrant the fullest belief of this. When we consider the perfection and fulness of Scripture, so often mentioned, together with the character of those to whom it is addressed—the influence which good or bad laws must necessarily produce in any society, but especially in one of a religious nature—God's declared abhorrence of will-worship—man's proneness to multiply ceremonies, and the pernicious tendency of these—the consequences which have actually arisen from departing from the word of God—When we consider that God has in every age given directions as to his worship, even in things indifferent—and especially the precision of the ordinances under the law—the faithfulness of Christ as the prophet of his church—the importance of unity to promote love among Christians—and the impossibility of unity taking place, if there be no standard:—Viewing all these things in connection, we tread upon firm ground when we assert, that there is

the greateſt reaſon to preſume, that the New Teſtament contains inſtructions concerning every part of the worſhip and conduct of Chriſtian ſocieties, as well as concerning the faith and practice of individuals.

CHAPTER III.*

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE BOUND TO OBSERVE THE UNIVERSAL AND APPROVED PRACTICES OF THE FIRST CHURCHES RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE.

SECTION I.

THE various opinions entertained reſpecting the obligation under which Chriſtians are laid to obſerve the approved and univerſal practices of the firſt churches, may be reduced to the following.

1ſt. That we are not bound by theſe at all, nor can they be aſcertained.

2d. That we are bound in a certain degree, or by the ſpirit of them, but that we have the liberty of making alterations according to circumſtances.

* Some of the arguments uſed in this chapter, appeared in a Letter on the Lord's Supper, from the Author, to the Church of Chriſt aſſembling in the Tabernacle in Edinburgh, to which are added, Miſcellaneous Obſervations.

3*d*. That the approved and univerſal practices of the firſt churches are recorded in Scripture for our learning; that theſe conſtitute a complete ſyſtem, adapted to every age, and to all circumſtances; and that by this the churches of Chriſt are to be regulated.

As to the firſt, I ſuppoſe few perſons who regard the authority of Chriſt and his apoſtles will defend it. It repreſents a great part of the New Teſtament, as merely calculated to gratify the curioſity of the antiquarian, who may deſire to inveſtigate the order and mode of worſhip of the firſt churches, as an entertaining piece of hiſtory. It alſo leaves us without any appearance of a guide at all in worſhip or order, and muſt conſequently imply, that theſe have no influence whatever on the welfare of Chriſtian churches; that the number of obſervances which we adopt is not of the ſmalleſt conſequence; and that with equal advantage we may diſcard them altogether. Theſe conſequences muſt neceſſarily ariſe from our having no rule on theſe ſubjects; for if they had not been wholly unimportant, doubtleſs the Lord Jeſus would not have left them unenjoined.

The ſecond opinion is in ſome reſpects preferable, but it labours under one great diſadvantage. It is ſo indefinite, that while it profeſſes to give us directions, it leaves us completely in doubt how far we ought to follow them. It is calculated to perplex the ſerious enquirer; to leave him in uncertainty whether,

conſidering his circumſtances, he be keeping too cloſe to, or departing too far from the apoſtolic pattern. From this he can only be delivered by adopting the opinion, that outward form or order is in a great meaſure, if not wholly unimportant; and this will lead him to regard many of the ordinances of Chriſt with indifference. It alſo lays men under great temptation to ſuit their modes of worſhip and order to their inclinations and their intereſt; that is, to act as if they had no rule whatever. Thoſe who hold it, will not however affirm, that we are at liberty to make alterations on all the practices of apoſtolic churches; they will not ſay of *all* the ordinances obſerved by them, that they are to be retained, or ſet aſide, according to circumſtances. They ought therefore to endeavour to draw a line, and to ſhew us what part of the order of the apoſtolic churches is to be uniformly obſerved, and what we may lawfully ſet aſide.

The third propoſition, that we ought implicitly to follow the practices of the apoſtolic churches, and that theſe are made known in Scripture with ſufficient plainneſs, promiſes fair, if it can be ſubſtantiated, to remove theſe difficulties. It will effectually guard us againſt uncertainty, and, if well founded, it will give us freſh cauſe to admire the wiſdom of Jeſus, and his tender care of his people, whoſe frame he well knows.

We have already conſidered the importance of attending to whatever is contained in the word of

God. Every one must admit, that much is said in the New Testament about the manner in which the churches of Christ ought to be regulated. All Scripture is practical, but this part of Scripture is not practical, if we are not bound to follow it; for in that case it is like any other history, which affords us matter of speculation rather than of instruction. Several reasons have been given which lead us to presume that the New Testament contains full instructions to regulate the conduct of churches, as well as of individuals. All the weight of these arguments directly bears upon the present question; for it is certain, that if we are not bound by the practices of the apostolic churches recorded in Scripture, there is no precise model whatever in the New Testament for the constitution and government of a church.

We may safely argue the obligation under which we are laid to follow, in all things, the approved and universal practices of the apostolic churches, from the character and office of the persons by whom these were enjoined. Jesus Christ did not personally establish churches; but he delegated to his apostles authority and power to do so. They were his chosen witnesses, appointed not only to testify that God had raised him from the dead, but endued with power from on high, to regulate the affairs of his kingdom on earth. To qualify them for this important work, they not only enjoyed the advantages of his personal ministry on earth, but during forty

days after his reſurrection, he inſtructed them in the things of the kingdom of God, Acts i. 3. But as the matter was too important to be left entirely to the management of men, though thus qualified, they were baptized alſo with the Holy Ghoſt, and received power to act as infallible teachers in the churches, Acts i. 5. 8. Speaking and acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they claimed that ſubmiſſion to their authority which belongs to God alone. "Ye know," ſays Paul, "what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jeſus. He, therefore, that deſpiſeth, deſpiſeth not man, but God, who hath alſo given us his Holy Spirit," 1 Theſſ. iv. 2. 8. It is true, he is here ſpeaking of moral precepts; but in regard to the order of the churches, he uſes exactly the ſame language. Having given various directions as to the manner of proceeding in the church of Corinth, he ſharply reproves them for preſuming to deviate from theſe. "What!" ſays he, "came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himſelf to be a prophet, or ſpiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," 1 Cor. xiv. 36, 37. No language can be ſtronger. If, then, even thoſe who were favoured with miraculous gifts, were not permitted to deviate from the preciſe order eſtabliſhed by the apoſtles in poſitive inſtitutions, how can after-ages think of aſſuming this liberty?

The apoſtles, at all times, anxiouſly avoided

preaching themſelves, as the lords over God's heritage. They profeſſed themſelves the ſervants of thoſe among whom they laboured, yet were they ever jealous of any diſobedience to their commands. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received from us*; and if any man obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed," 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. 14. Thoſe who lied to them, and attempted to miſlead them in their official capacity, lied not to men, but to God, Acts v. 4. It was, in fact, attempting to impoſe on the Holy Spirit. In the commiſſion given them by the Lord, we are plainly taught in what manner we are to view whatever they taught. "Go ye, therefore," ſaid Chriſt, "μαθητευσατε, make diſciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. They were firſt to publiſh the goſpel and to baptize believers, and then to teach them all things. This was the plan which they obſerved. They firſt preached ſal-

* Hence we ſee, that walking diſorderly was deviating from the apoſtolic traditions or ordinances;—a better definition of diſorderly conduct cannot be adopted in our own days.

vation to sinners, and then separated the disciples, Acts xix. 9. delivering to them the ordinances, 1 Cor. xi. 2. in the observance of which they were to seek after growing conformity to Christ, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. The Lord not only promised to be with them while they lived, but to the end of the world, to give testimony to the doctrines they preached, and to countenance the ordinances which they delivered—those "*all things*" which he had commanded them to teach, and which the Holy Ghost should bring to their remembrance, John xiv. 26.

The dignity of their office is pointed out by the most express testimonies of Scripture. Besides what has been already mentioned, we might quote Matt. x. 40. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." All who receive the Scriptures, receive, on the authority of the apostles, the great doctrines of the gospel. Many, however, think they may set aside their precepts in regard to lesser matters; but surely we ought to be very careful of admitting such a principle. How much it may be perverted is evident; for while one considers church-order to be unimportant, another may judge baptism, the Lord's supper, or even the great doctrines of the gospel, to be matters of small moment, provided we are but moral in our conduct. 'Melancthon, complying with the suggestions of that lenity and moderation which were the great leading principles in

the whole courſe of his conduct and actions, declared it as his opinion, that in matters of an *indifferent* nature, compliance was due to the imperial edicts. But in the claſs of matters indifferent, this great man and his aſſociates placed many things which had appeared of the higheſt importance to *Luther*, and could not, of conſequence, be conſidered as indifferent by his true diſciples; for he regarded as ſuch, the doctrine of *juſtification by faith alone*; the *neceſſity of good works to eternal ſalvation*; the *number of the ſacraments*; the *juriſdiction* claimed by the *Pope and Biſhops*; *extreme unction*; the obſervance of certain religious feſtivals, and ſeveral ſuperſtitious rites and ceremonies. Hence aroſe that violent ſcene of contention and diſcord that was commonly called the *adiaphoriſtic* controverſy, which divided the church for thirty years, and proved highly detrimental to the progreſs of the Reformation *.' We may learn from this, how abſurd is the idea of thoſe who affirm that things in themſelves indifferent are left to our diſcretion. This principle, in fact, tends to throw the whole of religion into confuſion, for each man would contend, that he only added or neglected things indifferent. We have an inſtance of one who acted contrary to the mind of the apoſtles in matters of church-order, and who is denounced as one who did not receive them: "I wrote unto the church, but

* Moſheim's Eccl. Hiſt, cent. xvi. ſect. 3. part 2. tranſlated by MacLaine,

Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not," 3 John 9.

To the apoſtles were committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. By publiſhing their doctrine they have opened the door, and none ſhall enter any other way. When the Phariſees made void the law of God by their traditions, they are ſaid to have taken away the key of knowledge; perverting the doctrines of Scripture, and miſleading their diſciples, they neither entered heaven themſelves, nor permitted others to enter. But the apoſtles being put in truſt with the goſpel, were faithful ſtewards of the myſteries of God, and both ſaved themſelves and thoſe who heard them. They publiſhed remiſſion of ſins to all who believed; they denounced condemnation on the diſobedient; and Jeſus aſſured them he would ratify their words: "Whoſeſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whoſeſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained," John xx. 23. Being dead, they ſtill ſpeak to us in the New Teſtament; and every individual, to the end of time, whom they condemn, ſhall be condemned; and to thoſe whom they juſtify, there ſhall be no condemnation. Hence the church is ſaid to have twelve foundations, and in them are written the names of the twelve apoſtles of the Lamb, Rev. xxi. 14. Hence is it ſaid to be built on the foundation of the apoſtles, Eph. ii. 20. When, therefore, we trace any obſervance of ſocial religion up to the approved practice of the firſt

churches, we go as high as we can, or as we need to go, we arrive at divine authority, and are consequently bound implicitly to obey.

We have an additional proof on this subject, from the consequence attached by the apostles to the ordinances they delivered to the churches. That *they* judged these to be highly important, is evident from so much being said on the subject in their writings. We noticed that Scripture contains nothing superfluous; it is *all* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. If precepts concerning their order and institutions were not intended to regulate ours, why are they delivered so particularly, where brevity is in general so much studied? And if these were intended for our direction, we must by no means set aside the authority of apostolic practice, to remind the churches of which the Epistles were written.

The importance attached by the apostles to these subjects, is also manifest from the very strong manner in which they condemn those who deviate from them, and from the jealousy with which, as mentioned above, they enforced obedience. All the abuses which Paul in his Epistles so earnestly endeavoured to rectify, respected matters of order and discipline. I only recollect one instance where his reproof appears to regard what we call doctrine. Having mentioned those who denied the resurrection, says he, "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners; awake to

righteouſneſs and ſin not, for ſome have not the knowledge of God." Here he ſeems afraid leſt the church ſhould be infected with this dreadful error; but even this is noticed as a proper ſubject of diſcipline, for he adds, "I ſpeak this to your ſhame." The other abuſes in the church of Corinth conſiſted in their neglecting the order he had preſcribed, in their following different leaders, &c. The Galatians only added circumciſion, and ſome of the external rites of Judaiſm, to the number of their ordinances; but their embracing theſe ſhewed ſo much carnality of mind, that the apoſtle feared leſt he had loſt his labour among them, chap. iv. 11.

No doubt the Epiſtles chiefly relate to the great doctrines of the goſpel, and to the practice which Chriſtians ſhould maintain; but neither of theſe was the occaſion of moſt of the reproofs which the apoſtle found neceſſary. Thus we learn how early Satan endeavoured to obſtruct the ſucceſs of the goſpel, by leading men away from the ſimplicity of the ordinances, and by removing, under many plauſible pretences, the barriers appointed by the Lord to promote love, harmony, and holineſs in his churches, and then breaking in like a flood by means of thoſe who ſpake lies in hypocriſy, having their conſciences ſeared as with a hot iron. This indeed always appears to have been the progreſs of error in the churches. Firſt the ordinances were corrupted by ignorant or deſigning men; then followed various abuſes for

which there was now no ſuitable remedy; and, by and bye, the goſpel was perverted and loſt ſight of entirely. How remarkably do we ſee this verified in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. The myſtery of iniquity worked in the apoſtles time. Men like Diotrephes, loving to have the pre-eminence, received them not. Thus did the ſpirit of antichriſt begin to ſhew itſelf. "We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us; hereby know we the ſpirit of truth and the ſpirit of error," 1 John iv. 6. In the apoſtles days were many antichriſts, 1 John ii. 18. By and bye, primitive epiſcopacy, as it is called, was eſtabliſhed. The people being now taught to look on their biſhops as the *ſucceſſors* of the apoſtles, were eaſily led away from apoſtolic practice. It is the nature of error to proceed with increaſing rapidity. New ceremonies were introduced, and new officers appointed, till the man of ſin was firmly ſeated on his throne, and real religion almoſt forgotten. It is alſo worthy of obſervation, that the abuſes in the church of Rome, in regard to the power claimed by prieſts, the rites and ceremonies, firſt awakened mens minds to the corruptions of that mother of abominations. Dr Campbell obſerves, that the Reformation began by expoſing the errors of the Romiſh ſyſtem reſpecting order and diſcipline. The attack upon what is generally called doctrine, he remarks, was poſterior, although after-

wards the reformers chiefly reſted their cauſe on this baſis.

We learn the importance which the apoſtles attached to the ordinances they delivered to the churches, not only by their cenſuring every deviation from theſe, but from their commending adherence to them. "Now I praiſe you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (or traditions) as I delivered them to you." He alſo ſent to remind them of his ways, 1 Cor. iv. 17. and repreſents attention to the order he had eſtabliſhed, as connected with ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith of Chriſt, Col. ii. 5. In ſhort, we have the ſtrongeſt proof of the importance which theſe holy men of God, under the immediate influence of his Spirit, attached to the particular ordinances which they delivered to the churches.

That theſe ordinances were not arbitrary and indifferent, is manifeſt alſo from the univerſal uniformity obſerved in the practice of them. This has indeed been called in queſtion by ſome. It would be ſufficient to reply, we have no hint of any allowed deviation; but Paul expreſsly tells us, he delivered the ſame ordinances to *every* church. "For this cauſe have I ſent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved ſon, and faithful in the Lord, who ſhall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Chriſt, as *I teach every where in every church*," 1 Cor. iv. 17. Here he not only ſtates the uniformity

of his practice in the moſt expreſs terms, but ſays concerning his ways, that they were *in* or *by Chriſt*, that is, appointed by Chriſt. This perfectly coincides with the paſſage formerly quoted, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. where, in giving directions about the order to be obſerved in the church of Corinth, he requires the moſt highly favoured with ſpiritual gifts to acknowledge, that the precepts he there delivers were the *commandments* of the Lord. Hence it follows, that an injunction delivered by an apoſtle, or the practice of any church, handed down to us in Scripture as ſanctioned by him, ought to be accounted a revelation of the Lord's will to us on that particular point; for the apoſtles did not in theſe matters give their advice, but delivered their injunctions with authority: and if we may credit their own declarations, they did not deviate in one inſtance, from their practice in another. Paul elſewhere alludes to the uniformity of his practice in the churches. "As God hath diſtributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, ſo let him walk, and ſo ordain I in *all* churches," 1 Cor. vii. 17. This might appear leſs remarkable, if his labours had been confined to a particular region, but the ſphere in which he moved was wide and extended. He planted churches among Greeks and Barbarians in Europe and in Aſia, yet in them all he delivered the ſame ordinances, and enjoined the ſame practices. This ſimilarity in the order of the churches was preſerved for a conſiderable time after the

deceaſe of the apoſtles. Let any one turn to Lord King's Inquiry, or read Moſheim's Larger Account of the Firſt Century *, and he will ſee that diverſity of climate, character, and political circumſtances, made no difference whatever in church-order. Deviations from the original conſtitution ſoon afterwards indeed began to take place, but for a conſiderable time the reſemblance in the order of all the churches was apparent. The Romans were under the neceſſity of varying the form of civil government in their colonies or provinces, according to the circumſtances of the countries compoſing their vaſt empire; but wherever the goſpel was preached, the ſame ordinances were delivered to all the churches, and they became followers of the churches which in Judea were in Chriſt Jeſus, not only in ſuffering the ſame perſecutions, but in obſerving the ſame inſtitutions and regulations.

The apoſtles interfered not with civil laws, but they taught all Chriſtians to renounce their former religious cuſtoms, and to be governed entirely by Jeſus Chriſt. His laws are equally ſuited to every climate, and every country, and therefore, in every ſituation, they were to be adopted by his followers, who were thus to be diſtinguiſhed from all other people.

The uniformity of the practices of the apoſtles eſtabliſhed in the churches, is not only manifeſt

* J. L. Moſhemii Inſt. Hiſtor. Chriſt. Majores Sæcul. Primum. Helmſt. 4to. 1739.

by ſuch expreſs declarations as we have noticed, but alſo in all the epiſtles, in every one of which we ſee the very ſame conſtitution and ordinances. Can we ſuppoſe that their practice actually varied, and yet that not a hint of this is to be found in any of the epiſtles which relate ſo much to the ſubject? Timothy and Titus were employed by Paul to regulate the churches which he had planted. He informs Timothy that his purpoſe in writing to him was to teach him how to behave in the houſe of God, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Among other things in theſe epiſtles, we have the apoſtle's inſtructions reſpecting various parts of the internal government of the churches, and theſe all convey the idea of complete uniformity. Theſe faithful miniſters were employed by Paul to ſet in order churches in countries far diſtant from each other, and ſurely we muſt have had ſome hint on the ſubject, if they might lawfully deviate from the uſual order in conſequence of local circumſtances.

But in conſidering the obligation under which we are laid to follow the approved practice of the apoſtolic churches, we may be allowed to advert to the ſentiments generally held amongſt profeſſed Chriſtians. If any of the religious rites of any party be called in queſtion, do they not uniformly endeavour to eſtabliſh theſe by appealing to the practice of the primitive Chriſtians? Indeed ſo far has this been carried, that the practice of the three firſt centuries after Chriſt has alſo been reſorted to. This has opened a wide door for

abuſes. It goes upon the ſuppoſition, that during that time the churches retained their original purity; but ſurely we may learn from the corruptions in the churches, even in the days of the apoſtles, that this was moſt improbable. We are even expreſsly warned upon this ſubject, by being informed that the myſtery of iniquity was at work in their time. Probably the practices of the three firſt centuries is appealed to in place of the apoſtolic, from ſuppoſing that the latter is of itſelf inſufficient; but this is by no means the caſe. If we carefully obſerve the expreſs precepts delivered in the New Teſtament, the practices of the churches mentioned with approbation, and what is ſaid reſpecting the abuſes which ſo early crept in, through ſlight of men and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lay in wait to deceive, we ſhall find a complete ſyſtem, calculated to anſwer every purpoſe which Jeſus had in view in the inſtitution of churches.

We have no reaſon, then, to ſuppoſe with ſome, that the Scriptures are deficient in ſpecific directions on the ſubject, and that much is left to our own diſcretion. This opinion originated in men miſtaking the nature of a Chriſtian church. Inſtead of viewing it as a body of Chriſtians knit together in love to Chriſt and to one another, aſſociating for mutual edification and comfort, it has been repreſented as a complex machine, involving various objects both temporal and ſpiritual. To the management of ſuch a body,

the ſhort and ſimple rules delivered in the New Teſtament are indeed completely inadequate; but in place of conſidering theſe rules as too general, and requiring additions of our deviſing, it would argue more humility, and a greater ſenſe of our own ignorance, to ſuppoſe that a body which could not be governed by the laws recorded in Scripture, muſt be ſomewhat different from an apoſtolic church. In one ſenſe we may admit that the Scriptures contain only general rules. This is the caſe with all laws whatſoever, and equally applies to the moral precepts as to the poſitive inſtitutions of the word of God.

A remark by a late writer upon this ſubject is well worthy of conſideration: 'It is ſaid, that there are many general rules given to the apoſtolic churches, for the actual and orderly obſervance of which, it is neceſſary that various ſubordinate circumſtances ſhould be ſettled which are left undetermined in Scripture; and that the determination of ſuch circumſtances in any church, according to the dictates of human prudence and expediency, is not to be cenſured as a departure from the laws of Chriſt, or an unwarrantable addition to them. In reply (adds he) to this I would obſerve, that none can conſiſtently urge it who do not aim at walking according to theſe general rules delivered by the apoſtles, or who continue in any church where they are ſet aſide, and where any regulations inconſiſtent with their obſervance are adopted. Now it is certain, that

not only the eſtabliſhed church of this country is ſuch, but that every political eſtabliſhment of religion under the name of Chriſtianity has ever been ſuch, and muſt neceſſarily be ſuch from the nature of the thing. The call, therefore, remains in full force upon every diſciple of Chriſt, "Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate." Brethren, according as you obey this call, you will find that his laws leave nothing undetermined, which it is needful or profitable ſhould be determined *.'

I adore, ſaid one, the fulneſs of Scripture. This fulneſs reſpecting every thing connected with religion, will be more evident the better we underſtand it. When we come to ſpeak of the order and diſcipline of the firſt churches, I hope it will appear, that no caſe *can* occur in a church of Chriſt, concerning which we have not ſufficient directions in the New Teſtament. Theſe directions do not exclude the exerciſe of prudence and diſcretion. Wiſdom is neceſſary to apply the laws of Chriſt properly; but to uſe our reaſon in the application of laws, is widely different from aſſuming a right to add to, or to alter them. Some allege, that if we exclude all human authority, modern churches have none to occupy the place of the apoſtles, who ſuperintended the firſt churches. Yes; we have the apoſtles ſtill. Being dead, they ſpeak to us in Scripture. When on earth

* Addreſs to Believers of the Goſpel of Chriſt, &c. by John Walker, B. D. late Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, p. 48.

their weapons were not carnal; they governed by perſuaſion and not by force. Some withſtood their words, and did them much evil, 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15. but as the ſervants of the Lord they did not ſtrive, but in meekneſs inſtructed even thoſe who oppoſed them, looking to God to give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. We are ſtill favoured with their inſtructions, and as the canon of Scripture is complete, we have greater advantages than the early churches. We alſo ſee in the abuſes which took place, the dangers to which ſuch ſocieties are expoſed; and in the inſtructions they received, the proper means of avoiding them, and the remedies which are to be applied to redreſs them if they do occur.

Section II.

But ſtill we are told, that we have no ſpecific directions in the New Teſtament, fixing the conſtitution and government of a Chriſtian church under all circumſtances. If this means, that no ſuch directions are drawn up in a ſyſtematic form, it is admitted. No part of divine truth is there delivered to us in this manner. Moſt of our Lord's precepts aroſe out of the circumſtances in which his diſciples were placed. They were peculiarly adapted to theſe circumſtances, and hence many have frequently argued, that our ſituation being different, we are not to underſtand them as binding all generations.

Arguments of the same nature, subversive of divine truths the most fundamental, have been maintained. How often has it been said, that regeneration and conversion were requisite only for heathens? that the separation from the world so often insisted on, does not apply to our circumstances who live in a Christian country? that self-denial and taking up the cross are now unnecessary? with many more equally absurd evasions of the doctrines and laws of Christ. Had the Lord delivered these doctrines in a systematic form, and declared them to be equally applicable to every age, such objections might have been removed; but carnal men would still have found other objections as excuses for disregarding what they disliked. We may be assured that the mode of teaching adopted by our Lord is the best. Indeed there is a very obvious reason for divine truth not being revealed in the form of *human* systems, similar to those of philosophy or of law, or of any other science or art. It would have appeared less practical. We are all sufficiently prone to turn the doctrines of the gospel into speculation, and the most effectual means of guarding against this has been adopted in the word of God. Let any one devote himself to the study of systems of divinity constructed by men, with all the formalities of human science, he will find himself grow forgetful that divine truth is concerned *with his business and his bosom*, and that it does not readily *win its way to his heart*.

Nothing can tend more to ſhew us the practical nature of the precepts delivered to the churches, in regard to poſitive inſtitutions, than the hiſtory of their appointment accompanying ſo cloſely that of the circumſtances which gave riſe to them. Thus the election of deacons is related in connection with the complaint that the widows were neglected, Acts vi. the ordinance of putting away a corrupt member with the hiſtory of the inceſtuous perſon, 1 Cor. v.; and this ſhould teach us, what we ſhall conſider more particularly hereafter, that theſe precepts are not arbitrary, but contrived with the moſt conſummate wiſdom, to repreſs ſin and to promote holineſs. Thus many of the laws, too, delivered to Iſrael, are beſt underſtood when we view them in connection with the events which gave riſe to them. The account of Nadab and Abihu illuſtrates and enforces the precept, that the prieſts ſhould drink no wine when going into the tabernacle, Lev. x. 9. The Lord was pleaſed to permit and record the guilt of the ſons of Aaron, for a warning to future prieſts; and he alſo permitted and recorded many abuſes in the apoſtolic churches, with the remedies he was pleaſed to provide, that, by attending to them, we might be guarded againſt ſimilar evils. At the ſame time it muſt be admitted, that precepts delivered in the hiſtorical way may be readily overlooked by inattentive readers, who, while amuſed with what they read, may forget that it is a revelation from God for *their* direction and in-

ſtruction. This appears to have been the caſe as to church-order. We often find thoſe who candidly ſay they have never ſtudied the ſubject, at the ſame time perfectly confident that no rule relating to this is contained in the New Teſtament. But ſurely there may be ſuch a rule, although ſome attention, with prayer, and ſtudy, be neceſſary to diſcover and underſtand it. I recollect an obſervation in a ſyſtem of moral philoſophy, that while Scripture gives us many excellent moral directions, it by no means contains a complete ſyſtem of morals. The author muſt have adopted this ſentiment, not from there being any real deficiency in Scripture reſpecting the various duties we owe to our neighbour, but from their not being drawn up in a ſyſtematic manner, and thus he fell into the ſame error with thoſe who for the ſame reaſon maintain, that the word of God contains no preciſe unalterable ſtandard of church-order.

All good men have highly diſapproved of thoſe who excuſe their diſregard of the great doctrines of the goſpel, by ſaying they were only intereſting to the firſt ages, and in the peculiar circumſtances in which men were then placed; but, while judging others, do they not condemn themſelves, if they plead for ſetting aſide ſcriptural order by ſimilar arguments? The precepts in regard to both are delivered in the ſame manner, and the ſentiment by which the one is ſet aſide, may be employed by others in wreſting the Scriptures to their own deſtruction.

The ſimplicity and want of parade in Chriſt's kingdom, lead men to overlook or undervalue many important doctrines, as well as ſmaller precepts. The following obſervations from a ſermon of Preſident Edwards, on the Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath, give a ſatisfactory anſwer to thoſe who object to the obligation of apoſtolic practice, becauſe not delivered in a particular way. 'The mind and will of God concerning any duty to be performed by us, (ſays that excellent writer) may be ſufficiently revealed in his word, without a particular precept, in ſo many expreſs terms, enjoining it. The human underſtanding is the ear to which the word of God is ſpoken; and if it be ſo ſpoken that that ear may plainly hear it, it is enough. God is ſovereign as to the manner of ſpeaking his mind, whether he will ſpeak it in expreſs terms, or whether he will ſpeak it by ſaying ſeveral other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but ſufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is ſufficient; whether we hear ſo many expreſs words with our ears, or ſee them in writing with our eyes; or whether we ſee the thing that he would ſignify to us, by the eye of reaſon and underſtanding.

'Who can poſitively ſay, that if it had been the mind of God that we ſhould keep the firſt day of the week, he would have commanded it in ex-

preſs terms, as he did the obſervation of the ſeventh day of old? Indeed, if God had ſo made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way, then there would have been ſome reaſon to ſay ſo. But God hath given us ſuch underſtandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way ſuitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God diſcovers his mind in any way whatſoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience; and God may expect our notice and obſervance of his revelation, in the ſame manner as if he had revealed it in expreſs terms *.'

The ordinances of Chriſt are delivered in the ſame way as all human laws. Theſe are eſtabliſhed according to circumſtances, and promulgated to the generation exiſting at the time of their enactment, as repreſenting every future generation; and unleſs they are repealed, or the conſtitution to which they belong be overturned, they are conſidered, in conſequence of ſuch promulgation, to be binding on poſterity. Some indeed may grow obſolete, either from the inconveniencies attending their execution, or from thoſe changes to which all human affairs are liable. But the laws of the kingdom of Chriſt are dictated by infinite foreknowledge and wiſdom. This kingdom cannot be moved. The face of the world may be

* Preſident Edwards' Twenty Sermons, p. 203. Edin. 1789.

changed, the ſentiments of men may alter, but *it* is not of the world, and cannot be affected thereby. 'The laws of the goſpel (ſays Mr Walker) extend to the heart as well as to the life, and ſpeak to all men without exception, at all times, and in every ſituation. They utter their voice with ſuch preciſion and perſpicuity, that none can be at a loſs to diſcover their meaning. They do not bend to the humours of men, nor accommodate themſelves to thoſe flexible maxims and cuſtoms which by turns prevail in this or the other age and country; far leſs do they grow obſolete, as human ſtatutes do, which by long diſuſe loſe their force, and become void. Like their great Maſter, what they were yeſterday, they are the ſame to-day; and in every ſucceeding period their efficacy will continue, till time itſelf ſhall be no more. And, therefore, when I repeat the words of this ſacred book, you are to conſider them as ſpoken to yourſelves in particular, and no leſs binding upon you in their moſt ſimple and obvious meaning, than they formerly were upon thoſe to whom they were primarily addreſſed *.'

The difference of our circumſtances is the great plea with many for rejecting the practice of apoſtolic churches. They conſider this to be a ſufficient warrant for ſetting aſide what they admit to *have been* of divine inſtitution. Moſheim, in his Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, openly maintains this:

* Mr R. Walker's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 327. London 1792.

'Neither Chriſt nor his holy apoſtles have commanded any thing clearly or expreſsly concerning the external form of the church, and the preciſe method according to which it ſhould be governed. From this we may infer, that the regulation of this was in ſome meaſure to be accommodated to the time, and left to the wiſdom and prudence of the chief rulers, both of the ſtate and of the church. If, however, it is true, that the apoſtles acted by divine inſpiration, and in conformity with the commands of their bleſſed Maſter, (and this no Chriſtian can call in queſtion) then it follows, that that form of government which the primitive churches borrowed from that of Jeruſalem, the firſt Chriſtian aſſembly eſtabliſhed by the apoſtles themſelves, muſt be eſteemed as of divine inſtitution. But from this it would be wrong to conclude, that ſuch a form is immutable, and ought to be invariably obſerved, for this a great variety of events may render impoſſible. In that early time, every Chriſtian church conſiſted of the *people*, their *leaders*, and the *miniſters* or *deacons*, and theſe indeed belong eſſentially to every Chriſtian ſociety *.' Here it is granted, that a certain form of government was inſtituted at Jeruſalem by divine authority: and that all the primitive churches borrowed their conſtitution from thence; yet is it alleged, that we are not to judge that this form is immutable, becauſe in thoſe days a Chriſtian church conſiſted only of the

* Eccl. Hiſt. cent. i. part 2. chap. 2.

people, their leaders, and deacons. Now, what renders it impoſſible for us in theſe days to form churches conſiſting in like manner of *ſuch* people, *ſuch* leaders, and *ſuch* deacons? and what entitles us to take it for granted, that a divine inſtitution can be lawfully ſet aſide by the wiſdom and prudence of chief rulers of the ſtate and of the church?

The outward circumſtances of the Jews varied conſiderably, at different times, during the diſpenſation under which they lived, but ſtill the ordinances appointed at Sinai, in every jot and tittle, remained the ſame; and after their return from the captivity, the book of the law was their guide in the regeneration (as Joſephus calls it) of their affairs, and the Old Teſtament is cloſed with a commandment to obſerve the law of Moſes, with the ſtatutes and judgments, Malachi iv. 4. although the ſituation of Iſrael at that time was totally different from their circumſtances when the law was given, or before the captivity. But wherein conſiſts the great difference of our circumſtances? Not in the moral ſtate of the world, which could alone affect the queſtion. Doth not the whole world ſtill lie in wickedneſs? Are not Chriſtians ſtill a little flock? It is true, we live in a nation declared Chriſtian by the higheſt human authority; but what then? Does the mere name make any difference? Our laws favour the profeſſion of Chriſtianity; we are not perſecuted by the ſtate, as the firſt Chriſtians

were: so much the less temptation have we not fully to follow Christ. But probably the true difference lies here. From their circumstances they were obliged either to serve God or mammon. They were hated unless they renounced Christianity, both name and thing. We avoid reproach which we should incur by openly laying aside the name; and although all who are in earnest about religion, experience that the offence of the cross has not yet ceased, even by being united with the church *by law established*, or other bodies formed on similar principles, we may, in a great measure, escape suffering thereby, and many inconveniences. In primitive times, some practised circumcision, not for conscience sake, because they were persuaded it was enforced by divine authority, but lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ, Gal. vi. 12. They could profess Christianity, yet by retaining and preaching circumcision, they did not appear so singular, or wholly to have forsaken the religion of their relations and of their country; and thus were more at their ease than consistent and decided Christians.

If it be admitted, that the character of human nature is exactly the same as formerly, let it also be admitted, that the means adopted by the apostles were the best which could be employed for promoting the interests of a spiritual kingdom, for directing the hearts of believers into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ, and it

follows, that the ſame means will beſt promote the ſame end in every age. This opinion, that the order of churches ſhould neceſſarily vary with the varying circumſtances of men, aroſe from applying to the kingdom of Chriſt thoſe principles which only apply to a worldly kingdom; whereas it is not of the world, and conſequently cannot be affected in its government by the changes, whatever they may be, which take place in the world.

The moſt plauſible arguments in ſupport of the idea, that our circumſtances render it neceſſary for us to act on a different plan from the apoſtolic churches, are founded on their being poſſeſſed of miraculous gifts; but this will not bear examination. There are indeed ſome directions given in apoſtolic times, which, from the difference of our circumſtances, we cannot now obſerve, becauſe the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have ceaſed. We cannot even preciſely diſcriminate the different miraculous gifts mentioned in the New Teſtament. We read of ſpeaking either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by propheſying, or by doctrine, 1 Cor. xiv. 6. But although we may not be able preciſely to define what is meant by each of theſe, no one will ſay that on this account all ought to be ſilent in the church. The paſtor may ſurely admoniſh the church, or they may endeavour to edify one another, although they cannot propheſy or ſpeak with tongues. But where will the objection lead us? Thoſe who uſe it, ought to follow it out. It at once precludes all

appeal to the Scriptures on the ſubject of church government. If thoſe who uſe it quote Scripture as acknowledging preſbytery or ruling elders, they argue againſt themſelves. Let them argue with epiſcopalians on the ground of expediency, but they have no right to ſay, that epiſcopacy is not founded on Scripture; for it may be replied, in apoſtolic times they had miraculous gifts, which we have not. It may alſo be argued on this ground, that there is no neceſſity to have churches at all. The apoſtles indeed collected churches, but as they had miraculous gifts, their circumſtances were entirely different from ours. We *may* therefore forſake the aſſembling of ourſelves together, unleſs we happen to judge it expedient, and this muſt be a matter of forbearance among thoſe who differ. Baptiſm with water was frequently accompanied with the communication of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; but as theſe have now ceaſed, however expedient water-baptiſm may be, its neceſſity is a matter of doubtful diſputation, on which good men may differ, while they equally honour the laws of Jeſus Chriſt. Nay, this mode of arguing will lead to ſtill more ſerious conſequences. Paul lived by faith on Jeſus Chriſt. But Paul had, in a remarkable degree, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which we have not, and therefore our circumſtances being different, it does not follow we are bound to live by faith. Jeſus promiſed that theſe ſigns ſhould follow them that believe—"In my

name they ſhall caſt out devils, they ſhall ſpeak with new tongues, they ſhall take up ſerpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it ſhall not hurt them; they ſhall lay hands on the ſick, and they ſhall recover," Mark xvi. 17, 18. But now there are no ſuch perſons in the world; therefore it follows, either that this promiſe has failed, in other words, that there is no truth in Chriſtianity, or that there is now no one who really believes it to be true. Both of which ſuppoſitions being evidently abſurd, it is clear that the bleſſings promiſed to *believers* were confined to the firſt ages, before Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed, and that in our ſituation, born as we are in a Chriſtian country, we ought not to lay too much ſtreſs upon faith, for we may be real believers, and yet have our portion aſſigned us with the tranſgreſſors. We may be Chriſtians, but if we are wicked Chriſtians, we ſhall aſſuredly be condemned. Such is the ſtyle of argument which men ſhould conſiſtently maintain.

Thoſe for whom we write would not approve of this concluſion. They would ſay it was founded on miſrepreſentation, for although miraculous gifts have ceaſed, the manner of a ſinner's acceptance with God remains the ſame, the promiſes are all *yea* and *amen* in Chriſt Jeſus. "He that believeth ſhall be ſaved, and he that believeth not ſhall be damned," is a truth which cannot be affected by any change of outward circumſtances in thoſe to whom the goſpel is preached. We

anſwer their objection againſt our being bound by the precepts delivered by the apoſtles to the churches, in the ſame manner. The ordinances delivered in the New Teſtament reſpecting goſpel worſhip, remain the ſame, and are binding in every ſituation. Our not being poſſeſſed of miraculous gifts, precludes us from following certain practices enjoined on thoſe who poſſeſſed them; but this no more frees us from the obligation of precepts delivered to the churches, which are in our power, than poverty, which might effectually prevent us from diſtributing to the neceſſities of others, would warrant us to ſet aſide the precept of loving our neighbour as ourſelves.

What has been ſaid will apply to the different offices in the apoſtolic time, which are enumerated in Scripture, apoſtles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diverſities of tongues, 1 Cor. xii. 28. We cannot diſtinguiſh among theſe, but we may reſt ſatisfied with knowing, that biſhops or elders, and deacons, are the only offices eſſential to a church of Chriſt. The qualifications neceſſary for theſe, are written for the direction of the churches in their choice, 1 Tim. iii. Not ſo the qualifications of an apoſtle or evangeliſt; theſe were extraordinary miniſters, choſen by the Lord himſelf. A church may be complete without them, and indeed they did not properly belong to any church. Whether a church be poſſeſſed of miraculous gifts, is a queſtion which has no neceſſary connection

with its being or not being exactly on the apoſtolic model. It is an accidental circumſtance. Nations may have the ſame form of government, while the one is much larger and more powerful than the other, and while there are many other differences, merely local. But if one be a monarchy, and the other a republic, or if the ſupreme power be more limited in one country than the other, their form of government is eſſentially different. Were a king to direct that one of his ſons ſhould be placed upon the throne of a conquered country, with certain ſpecified powers, he would not conſider his orders to be complied with, if the people were to model the government in a manner conſiderably different from the form he had given, alleging, that the ſpirit of the commandment was attended to, for order was preſerved, and his ſon had a very comfortable ſituation as the firſt magiſtrate. True, the king would reply, but it is not the order I judged moſt expedient, nor has my ſon the meaſure of power which I appointed for him. If we might not thus trifle with an earthly king's commands, ſhall we pretend to eſtabliſh an order in the churches, different from that confeſſedly appointed by men who, in this reſpect, could not err, under the pretence that all we have to do, is to attend to the ſpirit of their directions, and that this ſpirit is merely to maintain an appearance of decency by any means we judge expedient? Such, ſays De Lolme, is the Engliſh conſtitution, that

thoſe who make alterations on this beautiful machine had need to beware, leſt they touch ſome unobſerved ſpring which may deſtroy the whole. Perhaps the remark is not inapplicable to our ſubject.

If we do not hold ourſelves bound by apoſtolic practice, we throw all order in churches into the utmoſt confuſion. Every man may conſider himſelf at liberty to judge whether, in his particular circumſtances, it is adviſable to attend to the ordinances at all. We may illuſtrate the effect of Chriſtians not holding themſelves bound by the approved practice of the apoſtolic churches, by mentioning the ſentiments of a pious miniſter in regard to the ordinance of baptiſm, who maintained, that none could ſhew this to have been intended as a perpetual ordinance in the church*. It was given, he ſaid, to the firſt diſciples, but it did not follow that it was always to be continued. How would thoſe who deny the obligation of recorded apoſtolic practice confute this opinion? yea, how could they prove that we are bound to obſerve ordinances at all? They may adminiſter baptiſm as a matter of expediency; but how can they ſhew that we are under any obligation on the ſubject? The Lord's ſupper, it may be ſaid, was appointed for the apoſtles, and although Paul

* Nor is ſuch a ſentiment peculiar to him. Books have been written in defence of this by perſons of great ability, and who have very attentively ſtudied the Scriptures, viz. Mr Emlyn, Mr Wakefield, and others.

received it by revelation that this ordinance ſhould be obſerved by the church at Corinth, as no *precept* is delivered *to us*, we may uſe our own diſcretion, according to the circumſtances in which we are placed. As to the firſt day of the week, we *may* obſerve it as well as any other day, but it muſt be left to our option, whether to prefer it to the Jewiſh Sabbath *. Where, it may be aſked, is the *precept* for forming a church at all? Where is there a *commandment* to *us* to exerciſe diſcipline? Where is the neceſſity for our having a ſtated miniſtry? In ſhort, this principle will, by neceſſary conſequence, lead to throw every part of Chriſtian worſhip completely looſe, and to ſet aſide every ordinance of the New Teſtament, except in thoſe caſes in which *we may judge it expedient to retain them.*

Few would chuſe to carry matters thus far, but the conſequences cannot be avoided, unleſs we admit, *that the recorded and approved practice of the apoſtles, who ſettled the order and diſcipline of the firſt churches, binds us equally as poſitive precepts would, directly addreſſed to ourſelves.*

It was ſaid formerly, "God is not the author of confuſion, but of peace, as in all churches of the ſaints;" and again, "Let all things be done decently and in order." But now there can be no uniformity. The laws of Chriſt muſt vary

* Several Baptiſt churches in England obſerve the ſeventh day, and do not hold themſelves bound to obſerve the firſt day of the week.

with local circumſtances; what is *order* in one country, will be diſorder in another; and the inquiry, what is order in a church? will exactly reſemble Mr Pope's inquiry,

> Aſk where's the North? at York—'tis on the Tweed,
> In Scotland at the Orcades—and there
> At Greenland, Zembla, or one knows not where;
> No creature owns it in the firſt degree,
> But thinks his neighbour farther gone than he.

A conſiderable part of Scripture is now become obſolete! The laws of Chriſt are changeable, and may be affected and ſet aſide by phyſical cauſes, or by the ſhakings of the nations! Although he has commanded us neither to add to, nor to take from his word, we may neglect the precepts once delivered to the ſaints, becauſe our external circumſtances are different from theirs!

This doctrine not only deſtroys the authority of apoſtolic precepts in regard to church-order, but might be employed to oppoſe every individual and relative duty. The Chriſtians at Rome were to be ſubject to the powers that be, Rom. xiii. Servants were to be obedient to their maſters at Epheſus, Eph. vi. 5. But our circumſtances are different, and it does not follow that theſe duties are incumbent on us *. Surely,

* In this way, all the directions to ſervants in the New Teſtament muſt be of little practical uſe in this country. The ſervants there ſpoken of were in general ſlaves, but ſervants in this country are in very different circumſtances.

then, the church needs an oracle, or an infallible head upon earth, who may, according to circumſtances, change times and laws, elſe (as when there was no king in Iſrael) every one will do what is right in his own eyes. It would appear, then, not only that the man of ſin aroſe from the fancied liberty of deviating from the primitive model, but that his riſe was almoſt a neceſſary conſequence of this fatal principle. Dr Reid ſhews, that Biſhop Berkley's conceit of the non-exiſtence of matter, and Mr Hume's of the non-exiſtence of ſpirit, was, in like manner, only carrying to a proper length the abſurd theory concerning *ideas*, which philoſophers had adopted for upwards of two thouſand years.

But do not all Chriſtians in fact hold themſelves virtually bound by apoſtolic practice? How can they vindicate, on any other principle, the neglect of the ſeventh, and the obſervance of the firſt day of the week? Why do they aſſemble together for worſhip on this day? Is it not becauſe this was the practice of the apoſtolic churches? If then we are bound in one inſtance, can we reject the ſame obligation in another? And certainly the regard that Chriſtians pay to the firſt day of the week, is a ſtriking proof of the importance they attach to apoſtolic practice; by which, in this inſtance, an expreſs command to ſanctify the ſeventh day, delivered with the utmoſt ſolemnity, is ſet aſide. The late Mr Randal, in his treatiſe on the Lord's Supper, after noticing thoſe paſſa-

ges of Scripture which prove that the apoſtles eſtabliſhed the obſervance of it every firſt day of the week, and quoting thoſe which eſtabliſh their obſervance of the Lord's day, adds, 'In theſe we think that we vindicate well the change of the Sabbath day, and the ſanctifying it for holy purpoſes, againſt oppoſers, reckoning them defective in their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, if not living in oppoſition to its ſpirit and rules, who act not accordingly; but can we feel the *force* of a *law* ſo ſtrongly in the one caſe, and does it make ſo *ſlender impreſſions* on us in the other? Why it ſhould be thus, is not ſo eaſy, it may be, to tell, when confeſſedly no argument can be formed on theſe places for the one, that is not of equal force at leaſt for the other *.'

This reaſoning directly applies to our ſubject. We cannot ſet aſide the obligation of primitive practice, without almoſt renouncing Chriſtianity, and ſurely we ought not to aſſume a diſpenſing power to ſet aſide ordinances equally important with thoſe we retain, while we cannot pretend to have any warrant from Scripture for doing ſo. But ſo anxious are men to aſſert their freedom from obligation to obſerve *the practices of the firſt churches*, that they have objected that the laws delivered to them are not ſuitable at preſent, becauſe Chriſtians *are leſs holy*. If by this it be meant, that the ſyſtem of laws to be gather-

* If this reſpectable author had exemplified his own doctrine, it might probably have had more influence.

ed from the New Teſtament is not ſufficient to reſtrain or to influence a mixed multitude, calling themſelves a Chriſtian church, it is moſt freely granted. It appears to be one peculiar excellence of the order laid down in Scripture for the government of the churches, that real religion is eſſentially neceſſary to the obſervance of it. Without ſome meaſure of this, a church formed on the apoſtolic model can hardly exiſt or ſtick together. Love for the truth's ſake, is the perfect bond which connects the body, and where this is wanting, no artificial tie can be ſubſtituted in its place. The regulations delivered by the apoſtles are ſufficient to repreſs and correct the remaining corruption of real Chriſtians, but altogether inadequate to reſtrain ungodly men. If our churches are to be ruled by the Scriptures alone, they muſt be compoſed of members of the ſame deſcription as the apoſtolic churches.

If the objection mean, that real Chriſtians of the preſent times are not ſufficiently holy to be governed in the ſame way as formerly, it is abſurd. It is true, however, that a departure from theſe rules tends to promote conformity to the world. Thoſe who are connected with a church whoſe conſtitution is different from that delivered by the apoſtles, labour under a great diſadvantage. They do not enjoy all the means appointed for their edification. But do we not ſee in this objection the language of voluntary humility? In the ſame way we may ſet aſide ſome other

precepts, as too hard for us. Does not this resemble an unbeliever excusing his neglect of prayer, or of any other duty, by saying he has not faith, or is not sufficiently holy; that these duties are for believers, not for him. Why is he not a believer? is not this his guilt, and will it not prove his condemnation?

But probably the objection is founded on that common sentiment, that the former days are better than the present. The Scriptures inform us of the mighty power of the word of God on the hearts of men; what a change it produced; that the most unholy were sanctified through the truth: but they also relate the remaining corruption of Christians; they by no means represent them as faultless; the abuses in the churches are clearly pointed out, as at Corinth, in Galatia and Asia, &c. and there we see that they were men of like passions with ourselves.

But still if we are behind them, is there not a cause? Yes, say some, the Spirit is now withheld. Does our carnality, then, arise from the character of the days in which we live? Is not this very like charging it upon God? If indeed the Spirit be withheld, we may be assured our iniquities have separated between us and our God. Is his hand shortened? "Turn ye at my reproof," says the Lord, Prov. i. 23. "and I will pour out my Spirit upon you!" When we consider the unhallowed union which has taken place between the church and the world, and the consequent

conformity of real Chriſtians to worldly maxims and manners, no wonder if the Spirit has been grieved: and how ſhall his bleſſed influences be reſtored, but by ſearching and trying our ways, and returning to the Lord. Let us then tremble at God's word, and hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches. If we return to God, he will return to us. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanſe your hands, ye ſinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Ye adulterers and adultereſſes, know ye not that friendſhip with the world is enmity with God? James iv. 4. 8. Behold I ſtand at the door (ſays Jeſus) and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me, Rev. iii. 20.

Good men generally lament the low ſtate of religion in the reformed churches. Is it not worth while to inquire, whether this does not in part proceed from neglecting the ordinances of Chriſt, reſpecting the conſtitution and diſcipline of churches? Is there no reaſon to believe, that we experience the truth of what the Holy Ghoſt once and again aſſures us will be the caſe, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump?" Are not many Chriſtians in a ſituation where neither the precept, "Purge out the old leaven," nor that in Matt. xviii. 15. 17. are, nor can be, attended to? Is this a matter which God overlooks?

Some account for the low ſtate of religion, by

saying 'the church is yet in the wilderness *, Rev. xii. 14.; by and bye we shall have more light; meantime we must do what good we can, without running too fast.' But what brought the church into the wilderness? was it not the iniquity of its members? By disregarding the ordinances of Christ, they grieved his Holy Spirit, and by assuming the liberty of regulating the outward order of the churches according to circumstances, they brought themselves under the dominion of antichrist. "My people," said God of old, "would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me: So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust, and they walked in their own counsels," Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.

How is the church to be brought out of the wilderness? From whence is the light to arise? Are we to have a new revelation? or do we expect the teaching of the Spirit, except by means of the word of God? The same light has been in the world ever since the New Testament was completed; the pillar of the cloud and the fire still conducts the true Israel. If men do not wander in the same gross darkness as formerly, it is because somewhat more attention is paid to that blessed book; and if knowledge shall yet be greatly increased, this will be the effect of our

* It was the declared opinion of a late eminent minister of the church of Scotland, that there would be no remarkable revival of religion till the church and the world were separated; yet he continued in the national church till his death!

attending more clofely to the lively oracles of God, and conſequently of our underſtanding them better. Let us not then ſay, "The time is not come, the time when the Lord's houſe ſhall be built," but let every Chriſtian conſider his ways.

Section III.

Those who juſtify their own practice, while they evidently depart from the ordinances delivered by the apoſtles for the regulation of the churches, allege, that there are ſome ordinances which churches, profeſſing to be guided by apoſtolic practice in all reſpects, do not follow. For inſtance, the community of goods in the church at Jeruſalem—obſerving the Lord's ſupper daily—love-feaſts—waſhing one another's feet—the kiſs of love, and the example ſet in Paul's vow, Acts xviii. 18.

With reſpect to the firſt let it be obſerved, that there was no ſuch practice enjoined on that or any other church. Their ſelling their lands and houſes was *voluntary*, as evidently appears by Peter's addreſs to Ananias. His ſin did not conſiſt in not giving the whole price, but in endeavouring to deceive the apoſtles who were filled with the Spirit; and therefore his keeping back part of the price is called, lying to the Holy Ghoſt, Acts v. 3. "While it remain-

ed, (faid Peter) *was it not thine own?* and after it was fold, *was it not in thine own power?* Why haft thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou haft not lyed unto men, but unto God," ver. 4. He might have kept it without being found fault with; but when he hypocritically fought the character of deadnefs to the world, and love to the brethren, to which other members of the church were fo juftly entitled, Peter employed the authority given by the Lord to the apoftles, for the edification of the churches, 2 Cor. x. 8. to punifh him, for they had in them a readinefs to revenge all difobedience, 2 Cor. x. 6. Should a church, or any of its members, think it proper at prefent to have all things in common, they are accountable to Jefus Chrift alone; but if they made this a term of communion, it would be utterly unfcriptural. At all events, communion of goods was *confined* to the church of Jerufalem. Nothing of the kind is mentioned in any other church, but the contrary practice undoubtedly prevailed in feveral of thefe.

But although this anfwer is fufficient, there is another which totally removes this objection. There feems no juft ground for fuppofing that a community of goods did exift at Jerufalem in any other fenfe than that a great degree of liberality to the poor took place among them. I am aware of the difficulty of combating an opinion long taken for granted; but we ought to prove all things. Mofheim, the author of the Eccleiaftical

Hiſtory, has publiſhed a treatiſe on the ſubject *, to which I would refer thoſe who are not ſatisfied with the following remarks.

Luke's words are, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul: neither ſaid any of them, that aught of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own; but they had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were poſſeſſors of lands or houſes, ſold them, and brought the prices of the things that were ſold, and laid them down at the apoſtles feet; and diſtribution was made unto every man, according as he had need," Acts iv. 32. 34, 35.

This may either expreſs, that the whole property of the members, who had all ſold their houſes and lands, was put into a common ſtock, and that from this the neceſſities of each was ſupplied; or the words may, with equal propriety, be underſtood to mean, that there exiſted ſo much love in this church, that each of them was ready to communicate to the wants of their brethren, to the utmoſt of their power: that, to teſtify their affection, and to ſupply the wants of the poor, ſome who had houſes and lands ſold their poſſeſſions, and laid the price at the apoſtles feet, and that they ſuperintended the diſtribution to thoſe who had need. If the words may be

* De vera Natura Communionis Bonorum in Eccleſia Hieroſolymitana Commentatio, apud Diſſertat. ad Hiſt. Eccleſ. pertinent. Vol. alterum Alton. et Lub. 1767.

underſtood in either ſenſe, it remains to endeavour to aſcertain the true meaning. It is no ſlight argument for the latter, that it repreſents matters in a point of view much more natural and eaſy, correſponding both with the practice of other churches, and the precepts delivered to them by the apoſtles. The former teaches us to view the church of Jeruſalem as ſingular, in adopting a cuſtom which muſt neceſſarily have been attended with very great confuſion and inconvenience, and which, while it favoured more of oſtentation, does not ſeem ſo well calculated to anſwer the end. In ſupplying a great number from a common ſtock, ſome would be in greater danger of being overlooked, than if their fellow diſciples, after taking what was neceſſary for their own families, liberally diſtributed to the ſupport of their brethren. Beſides, ſome would require almoſt, or altogether all that they could earn. Did ſuch bring their earnings to the treaſury, and then take them away? This muſt have been the caſe, if the communion be underſtood in its common ſenſe, unleſs we are alſo to underſtand, that they gave up working altogether, and were ſupported from the common ſtock. But the complaint of the Grecians plainly ſhews us who were ſupplied out of the public fund. They complained of their *widows* being neglected; on the common ſuppoſition, each individual was to be ſupplied, and probably, in this caſe, there would have been a general complaint of the Grecians being

neglected, in place of their widows only being mentioned.

Now, we find in other churches directions to supply widows; and this affords a strong presumption, that the poor alone were supplied from the public fund raised by the voluntary and liberal contributions of the brethren. But if we are to take the words so strictly, then not only all the lands, but all the houses were sold, so that not only public tables must have been necessary, but houses also must have been purchased by the church for the use of the brethren. All is plain and easy on the other supposition; and in the conduct of the church of Jerusalem, every church of Christ has a beautiful example (which they are bound to follow) liberally to supply the wants of the poor, and, to the utmost of their power, to alleviate their necessities and their distress.

The precept given by Paul to the Corinthians will illustrate this subject. In exhorting them to make a contribution for the saints, he says, "I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: as it is written, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack," 2 Cor. viii. 13. 15. The meaning of this is very obvious. Paul exhorts the brethren at Corinth to contribute to the necessity of the poor saints in Judea; but to prevent

their imagining that this arose from partiality for his countrymen, he tells them, if they stood in need of it, he should be equally ready to exhort the Jewish brethren to assist them; that believers in Jesus ought, by this mutual communication of their worldly goods, to resemble the Israelites in the wilderness, who received an homer of manna whether they gathered much or little, Ex. xvi 18. But, by interpreting the equality in this passage with the same strictness as we generally do the communion of goods in Jerusalem, we may understand the apostle as enjoining a levelling system, for which indeed it has been urged, and an absolute communion and equality of property between the brethren at Corinth and Jerusalem.

Mosheim quotes a saying of Socrates, Παντα των φιλων κοινα, *all things are common among friends*, but none understand this in the same way in which Luke is generally understood in Acts iv. 32. He quotes many testimonies of the same kind from other ancient writers, where they speak in the same manner, and yet evidently mean only to express the liberality which real friendship produces. He observes, that we cannot gather from the writings of any author of the first and second century, that such a communion did not exist among Christians as that mentioned by Luke. He quotes a number of testimonies which mention the communion of goods among Christians in the same language that Luke uses, in circumstances where all confess that nothing more than great liberality

is meant. If, then, the communion of goods mentioned by them is consistent with each remaining master of his own property, is it not most natural to understand Luke as meaning the same? He says it was not till the fourth century was far advanced, that this passage in the Acts was thought to express that the church of Jerusalem had their goods in common, in the same way as the monks have, so that probably the true origin of the communion of goods, was to find countenance in Scripture for the absurdities of monkery. He concludes by thus giving the sense of the passage under consideration. 'There was truly great harmony amongst all the disciples of Christ. None of them preferred their wealth or their property above the love they bore to the brethren; but, wherever there was occasion, most willingly assisted the indigent. None regarded his riches as if the use of them was to be confined to himself, but each considered himself bound to share them with the poor. This sacred love went even farther, so that a sort of public treasury was established, from whence the sick, widows, orphans, and others who were in poverty, were supplied. To this each contributed according to his earnings, and when this was not sufficient to support so great a number of poor persons, some who were rich, or who had lands either without the city, or houses within it, besides what they themselves inhabited, sold these possessions, and devoted the price of them to the public good: and this

they did the more willingly, as they were assured that the destruction of Palestine and of the Jewish state was approaching *.'

It appears, then, that the communion of goods at Jerusalem, so far from being an argument against following the example of the apostolic churches, is an example worthy of imitation in every church of Christ, which is doubtless bound, in the strongest manner, to provide for the poor of the flock.

The only argument from Scripture for the practice of daily communion, is drawn from Acts ii. 46. "And they, continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Now it is certain, that although the expression *breaking bread* is used in the New Testament to signify the ordinance of the Lord's supper, it also

* 'Magna vero erat omnium Christi discipulorum consensio et concordia. Neque quisquam ex illis divitias et bona amori in fratres præferebat; verum si id res ita poscebat perliberaliter aliorum indigentiam juvabat. Nemo opes suas sic spectabat ac si usus earum ad se unice pertineret sed unusquisque suum esse credebat cum laborantibus ea communicare. Quin longius sanctus ille amor progrediebatur. Ut esset unde alerentur ægroti, viduae, orbi et reliqui, quos inopia premebat publicum quoddam condebatur ærarium, huc quantum quisque poterat de suis fructibus referebat. Quumque id non sufficeret ad tantum pauperum multitudinem sustentandum, opulentiores nonnulli quibus aut agri extra urbem, aut in urbe tecta erant, præterea quæ incolebant, possessiones istas vendebant conflatamque inde pecuniam publicis consecrabant commodis. Idque tanto faciebant libentius quanto noverant certius ultimam Palestinæ rebusque Judæorum cladem imminere'—*J. L. Mosheimii Dissert. ad Histor. Ecclesiast. pertinent. Vol. alterum, pag.* 52.

denotes partaking of food at an ordinary meal. See Matt. xiv. 19. Mark viii. 19. Luke xxiv. 35. In general, there is no difficulty in diſtinguiſhing when the one and when the other is meant. When breaking bread is mentioned, Acts ii. 42. in connection with the apoſtles' doctrine, and the fellowſhip and prayers, we cannot doubt this to intend the ordinance of Chriſtian worſhip, which conſiſts in breaking bread. So when we read of the diſciples at Troas coming together on the firſt day of the week to break bread, Acts xx. 7. we cannot be at a loſs to conclude that this means the Lord's ſupper. They met on the firſt day of the week, becauſe on that day Jeſus roſe from the dead. The queſtion then is, Whether the principal object of their meeting on the day which had come in place of the Sabbath, was to obſerve a ſolemn ordinance intimately connected with the reſurrection of Jeſus, or to join in partaking of a common meal? for certainly breaking bread, in the one ſenſe or in the other, was the chief purpoſe of their aſſembling, as is evident from the hiſtory. This queſtion may be anſwered without much difficulty. But if any one ſhould object, that there is not an abſolute certainty that the Lord's ſupper is meant, let him obſerve, that the church of Corinth, on the ſame day, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. came together into one place, and did eat and drink, profeſſing to obſerve the ordinance of the ſupper, 1 Cor. xi. 17. 20, 21.; let him farther take notice, that the ſame order of worſhip was

eſtabliſhed by the apoſtles in every church, 1 Cor. iv. 17. and ſurely his doubts muſt be removed.

It is admitted, that we cannot *ſo clearly* aſcertain, whether breaking bread in Acts ii. 46. means the ordinance of the ſupper, or partaking of ordinary food. But if it be at beſt doubtful, no ſolid argument can be built on it, and conſequently we cannot be accuſed of diſcarding univerſal and approved apoſtolic practice, becauſe we do not follow what, in the opinion of ſome, was the cuſtom of an apoſtolic church. Beſides, as the Lord's ſupper is evidently mentioned within four verſes, it is not probable that an account of it ſhould be here repeated. An important piece of inſtruction is contained in the 46th verſe, if we ſuppoſe it only to relate to their common food. It ſhews how theſe Chriſtians ate their bread with joy, Eccleſ. ix. 7. Being accepted in the beloved, and having their hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, the ſatisfaction produced by this entered into all their enjoyments and occupations, and their example is recorded that we may learn to rejoice in the Lord always.

With reſpect to the practice of churches after the apoſtles days, we do not hold ourſelves bound by it, nor by any thing not recorded in Scripture. What we contend for is, the indiſpenſable obligation of *all* the ordinances recorded in the New Teſtament as delivered to the churches; or, which is the ſame thing, the practice of the churches mentioned with approbation by the apoſtles. But it

does not appear that daily communicating was ever general, although it was doubtleſs the practice of ſome churches in the third and fourth centuries.

The Lord's ſupper was firſt obſerved on Thurſday. We ſhall not aſſert, that it is unlawful to obey Chriſt's dying commandment on any day; we only contend, that by the approved practice of apoſtolic churches, it is demonſtrated to be the appointment of Chriſt, that his churches *muſt* obſerve it every firſt day of the week, and the evidence of this is juſt as ſtrong as that they or we are required to aſſemble at all on that day to ſanctify it. If a church can aſſemble every day, they may do ſo, but at all events they *muſt* meet on the Lord's day, if they deſire to keep his commandments. So, if they *may* eat the Lord's ſupper every day, yet they are not warranted to condemn thoſe who only obſerve it on the firſt day of the week.

With reſpect to the *love feaſts*, we have no account in Scripture which fixes this to have been the practice of the apoſtolic churches at all, or which gives us any direction with reſpect to them. Jude indeed, ver. 12. ſays, "theſe are ſpots in your feaſts of charity." But certainly this is not ſufficient to aſcertain the cuſtom of a church regularly aſſembling to eat together. The expreſſion may refer to partaking of the Lord's ſupper, which is called the Chriſtian feaſt, 1 Cor. v. 8. one great end of which is to promote bro-

therly love; or it may refer to Chriſtians meeting together, not as a church, but in ſmaller companies, juſt as they now do when they viſit one another, eat and drink together, and enliven their ſociety by joining in prayer, and ſinging pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs. Would not a falſe profeſſor be *a ſpot* in ſuch a company?

But there is ſtill greater ambiguity in the original expreſſion, which we render *feaſts of charity*, (εν ταις αγαπαις) nor are commentators well agreed about the meaning of the word. The apoſtle, writing to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xi. 22. ſays, "Have ye not *houſes* to eat and drink in?" and then goes on to deſcribe the Lord's ſupper, the only occaſion on which, ſo far as we learn from Scripture, the whole church is bound to eat and drink in their collective capacity. He concludes the ſubject, "If any man hunger, let him eat at *home*, that ye come not together to condemnation," ver. 34. By this he did not mean to prevent the members from eating and drinking together, but undoubtedly this diſcountenances the idea, that their meeting *as a church*, to eat and drink, was an ordinance of Chriſt.

Much has been ſaid of the love-feaſts being practiſed in primitive times, ſubſequent to thoſe of the apoſtles; but Tertullian is the firſt who mentions them, above two hundred years after Chriſt, and he does it in ſuch an ambiguous manner, that no one can ſay whether he intended more than Chriſtians meeting in one another's houſes, a practice

highly proper, and which tends much to promote love, if these meetings be properly conducted.

The commandment for saluting one another with a *holy kiss*, is repeated once and again in the New Testament. In like manner, Christians are commanded to "wash one another's feet," John xiii. 14.; and one of the qualifications of those widows who were to be maintained by the church was, that they had washed the saints feet, 1 Tim. v. 10. Hence some Christians hold the necessity of the members of a church still saluting one another with a kiss, and washing one another's feet.

The kiss was enjoined as a token of affection. As such, it was much used in Judea and the eastern countries. This we learn from the Old Testament. The apostles, writing to those who lived in countries where it was customary, directed them to greet one another with a kiss of love; their saluting was not to be the effect of mere politeness, as among the people of the world, but it must be the expression of the heart. But we do not know in what way it was conducted *. Considering the jealousy of the natives of eastern countries, it is not probable that the apostles should recommend, even in the case of

* It is common in the East, for equals to salute one another by kissing the head, the hand, or shoulder. See Harmar's Observations on Scripture, vol. ii. p. 53, 54, 57.

admiſſion into a church, that all the members ſhould in this way ſalute one newly joined to them. Far leſs can we ſuppoſe, that it ſhould be attended to as a piece of mere form, as perhaps it has become in ſome churches which have adopted it. In this country, a kiſs is at preſent by no means ſo common a manner of ſalutation as in the Eaſt. This is manifeſt, both from the Old and New Teſtament, and from the account of eaſtern manners to this day. Paul commanded his brethren to ſalute one another, according to the cuſtom of the country where they lived; and if we, as members of a church, in brotherly love, uſe the modes of ſalutation cuſtomary in this country, we then obſerve this direction.

In thoſe countries where the apoſtles laboured, frequent *waſhing the feet* was neceſſary, both from dreſs and climate. When fatigued with travelling, and overpowered with heat, the latter of which might occur almoſt daily, the brethren being ready to waſh one another's feet was highly proper; but in this country it would be often troubleſome to the perſon we intended to ſerve, and conſequently a piece of mere bodily exerciſe, having much the appearance of voluntary humility. Thoſe amongſt us who hold its obligation, do not, we believe, differ from others who reject it, ſo much in practice as in profeſſion. The Lord of glory waſhed his ſervants feet, not to eſtabliſh an unmeaning ceremony, but to ſhadow forth the bleſſings of his ſal-

vation, and to teach us ever to be ready, with genuine humility, to perform the meaneſt ſervice, when neceſſary, for our fellow creatures, and eſpecially our brethren in Chriſt, and when it is ſo, no doubt this among the reſt.

We might alſo notice what is ſaid of *long hair*. This was in certain countries in thoſe days peculiar to women, and hence a mark of effeminacy in any man who affected it. It was confounding the diſtinction in the appearance of the ſexes. Had a Chriſtian in thoſe days ſhaved his beard, as we do, there can be no doubt it would have been equally condemned, and ſurely would have been highly improper. But ſo long as the dreſs of thoſe among whom we live is conſiſtent with decency, and evidently diſtinguiſhes the ſexes from each other, we may ſafely, and agreeably to the apoſtolic doctrine, comply with their cuſtoms—thus, in things in themſelves indifferent, which vary in every country according to circumſtances, becoming all things to all men, and giving none offence (caſting no ſtumbling-block in the way) either to Jew or Gentile, or the church of God.

We are aware of the uſe which may be made of theſe remarks. It may be argued, that if we do not literally and ſtrictly, in all things, adhere to the cuſtom of the churches as recorded in Scripture, we deſert our own argument, as to churches now being bound to obſerve exactly the ſame order with thoſe planted by the apoſtles. It will be granted by all, that they eſtabliſhed an

order highly expedient *as circumſtances then ſtood;* but it may be ſaid, that we are not tied down by the letter, but by the ſpirit of their traditions. The objection is ſpecious, and we do not wiſh to ſhrink from it. We truſt our object is not to perplex, but to eſtabliſh the minds of our brethren in Chriſt.

We obſerve, then, that the ſame objection has often been made againſt ſome of the moſt important moral precepts delivered by Chriſt. He commands his diſciples to pluck out a right eye, and caſt it from them, Matt. v. 29.; again, "Whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo," Matt. v. 39. We ſhould condemn while we wondered at any man who *literally* obeyed either the one precept or the other; yet we are bound to obſerve theſe precepts, we count them highly valuable, and think they convey much inſtruction. Says an objector, You admit that the language is figurative? Undoubtedly. He replies, Then why not conſider Chriſt's atonement, or the commandment to live by faith, as figurative alſo? We ſhould anſwer, that in the one caſe it was evident we ſhould act contrary to other expreſs precepts of Scripture; that nothing is there required of us, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God; that no man of common ſenſe was in any danger of being miſled by precepts which are evidently to be obſerved in their ſpirit, and not in the letter; and that, notwithſtanding ſuch precepts, the Bi-

ble is a very plain book, and that he alone who loves the darkneſs, can remain ignorant with it in his hand, John iii. 19. Perhaps we might not ſucceed in convincing him, but we ſhould not admit that his objection was well founded. In like manner, if Chriſtians will not allow that any fixed order was eſtabliſhed by the apoſtles for the churches of Chriſt in every age, becauſe we admit that the precepts which enjoin the kiſs of love, waſhing the ſaints feet, and not wearing long hair, ought to be obſerved in the ſpirit, and not in the letter, we muſt juſt ſay with the apoſtle when writing on this order, If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant, 1 Cor. xiv. 38. But we will not admit, that to ſilence his objections we ought to enforce cuſtoms, which, being merely local, and conſequently unmeaning and abſurd in another ſituation, would tend to make the religion of Jeſus ridiculous in the eyes of men who are happy to find a ſtumbling-block, and would ſay it enjoined needleſs peculiarities, and an affectation of ſingularity. No. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; and there is not one poſitive precept in the New Teſtament, which has not in view the cultivation of theſe, and not the promoting needleſs ſingularity. Upon the ſame principle on which our brethren tell us we diſobey the apoſtolic injunction, by omitting the kiſs of love, we may charge them with neglecting the precept to cut off a right hand, becauſe

they obey it in the ſpirit, and not in the letter. But while we cannot commend their minuteneſs, and, as we apprehend, their want of diſcrimination, we conſider this extreme into which they fall, as being very different from, and much leſs reprehenſible than the conduct of thoſe who ſhew, by their practice, that they think that the plaineſt apoſtolic practice in the government of churches, may be ſet aſide by the ambiguous term *expediency*. If we have been tedious on this ſubject, it is becauſe we thought it deſerved to be enlarged on, becauſe we highly reſpect arguments drawn from the word of God, and think the practice founded on them deſerves the greateſt attention. Surely no one will ſay, that when the apoſtle exhorts believing women to reverence their huſbands, after the example of Sarah, who called Abraham Lord, 1 Pet. iii. 6. that in order to obey this precept, it is proper or neceſſary to uſe the ſame *term* of reſpect; yet this muſt be the caſe, if we are not to diſtinguiſh between the ſpirit and the letter.

With reſpect to Paul's vow, Acts xviii. 18. it was never ſuppoſed that every part of the *private* conduct of the apoſtles is binding on Chriſtians. They were men of like paſſions with ourſelves, and conſequently fell into ſin; and their failings and ſins are not recorded in Scripture with approbation, but with cenſure. Witneſs Peter's diſſimulation, and Paul's quarrel with Barnabas. But they could make no miſtake in ſettling the

order of the churches, for which they were ſo well qualified by the inſtructions they received after the reſurrection, Acts i. 3. and eſpecially by the abundant influences of the Spirit, which they enjoyed in ſo ſingular a degree, that they could add this ſanction to their decrees, "He that knoweth God, heareth us," 1 John iv. 6.

Reſpecting Paul's conduct, Acts xxi. 23. and his circumciſing Timothy, we are bound to act in the ſame manner in ſimilar circumſtances. In theſe he became as a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews. We, too, are to become all things to all men, in things which are in themſelves indifferent. But let us take care how we apply this principle; we muſt, in the firſt place, aſcertain whether a thing be *lawful*, before we enquire whether it be *expedient*, 1 Cor. vi. 12. If this be not the caſe, we muſt withſtand even a brother to the face, Gal. ii. 11. and muſt by no means make improper compliances, to render the goſpel palatable to men of any deſcription.

Upon the whole, then, it appears, that *all Chriſtians are bound to obſerve the univerſal and approved practices of the firſt churches recorded in Scripture;*—that theſe practices, the expreſs precepts delivered by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, and the reproofs of diſorderly conduct in the apoſtolic churches, furniſh us with a clear, preciſe, and determinate rule, for every part of ſocial worſhip. It appears alſo, that the arguments which are employed in oppoſing this concluſion, are not only

calculated to introduce confuſion, to ſet aſide all ordinances whatſoever as binding upon the conſcience, but may alſo be employed to ſubvert our belief of the moſt important doctrines, and to lead us to make light of the moſt direct and important precepts of Chriſt.

This rule, it is true, is not delivered in the ſame manner as were the precepts to Iſrael of old; and the reaſon will be obvious, if we attend to the nature of the diſpenſation under which they were placed. The law, ſays an apoſtle, Gal. iii. 24. was our ſchoolmaſter until Chriſt; and the heir, he adds, ſo long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a ſervant, iv. 1. This procedure was, in every particular, exactly ſuited to the infant ſtate of the church. During this period, the Father declared his will by laying down a rule of conduct moſt palpable and plain, juſt as the elements of any ſcience are taught. Accordingly we find the whole ſyſtem which regulated their *moral conduct*, both as individuals and as a collective body, delivered to Iſrael exactly in the ſame way as the directions for their *ſocial worſhip*. But when grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt, when the people of God were to be no more ſervants but ſons, then we ſee a different mode of inſtruction adopted, both as to moral duties and ſocial worſhip: the particular lines of which are not indeed ſo minutely marked, but when taken as a whole, and conſidered in connexion with the elements already laid down, the

knowledge of the will of God is thereby conveyed to us in a manner not leſs preciſe and pointed than it was under the law.

The Scriptures contain as complete and preciſe directions for the form and regulation of churches, that is, of aſſociated Chriſtians, as for their conduct individually. The rule of duty for each, is laid down exactly in the ſame manner, and to the ſame extent. If difficulties occur in aſcertaining the former, are not theſe often equally felt in regard to the latter? Let the reader in this view ſeriouſly conſider the ſubject. If conviction of the truth of what is here advanced be the conſequence, he will at once perceive the vaſt importance of the preſent enquiry; the loſs which believers muſt neceſſarily ſuſtain if this ſubject be overlooked; and the manifeſt ſinfulneſs of their conduct who, either through prejudice or negligence, refuſe to examine, and thus make void a very conſiderable portion of the word of God. It is well known how little progreſs was made in natural philoſophy for thouſands of years. The reaſon is obvious. The inquiries of philoſophers were conducted on a wrong plan. They firſt formed a theory, and then ſought for plauſible arguments to eſtabliſh it. The conſequence was, one theory ſupplanted another, and it, too, gave place in its turn to a freſh one. Bacon introduced a new ſyſtem; he taught philoſophers to reaſon from facts, and thus gradually to form a ſyſ-

tem, one excellence of which would be, that, however limited, it would be ſolid.

Let Chriſtians adopt the ſame plan in regard to church-government. Inſtead of forming a ſyſtem agreeable to our views of expediency, and then ſearching for paſſages of Scripture to ſupport it, let us begin by aſcertaining particular facts in regard to the apoſtolic churches.

According to Bacon, nothing in natural philoſophy ought to be aſſumed which is incapable of being proved; ſo ought it to be in our caſe. Let us enquire, for inſtance, what preciſe idea is conveyed by the word "church" in the New Teſtament? of what characters the apoſtolic churches were compoſed? what offices they had? what qualifications were required for the diſcharge of the duties of theſe? what ordinances they obſerved? how they proceeded in regard to offences? Thus we ſhall tread on ſure ground.

In ſetting out on our enquiry, we muſt expect ſome difficulties. Our knowledge of every part of revelation is imperfect; but on this account to reject what is plain, is as abſurd as for a philoſopher to give up the ſtudy of nature becauſe he meets with what he does not underſtand. The more his knowledge increaſes, the more will his difficulties be removed. On this plan I intend to proceed in the following pages. How far I may ſucceed in exactly delineating the conſtitution and government of the primitive churches, muſt be left to the judgment of thoſe who ſhall peruſe

this work. I am fully perſuaded that the Scriptures do contain an exact rule, ſuited to every ſituation. I hope to be able to ſtate this, without falling into any very important error. I am far from ſuppoſing, however, that every text ſhall be ſo clearly illuſtrated as to carry conviction to the minds of thoſe who read with attention, or even who agree with me in general; but we ſhould remember, there are other parts of divine truth, in the explanation of which Chriſtians who hold the ſame general ſentiments are not agreed.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CAUSES OF THE DIVERSITY OF OPINION AMONG CHRISTIANS RESPECTING SOCIAL WORSHIP, AND THE EVILS ARISING FROM IT.

HAVING endeavoured to eſtabliſh the obligation under which we are laid to follow the approved practice of apoſtolic churches, before we proceed to delineate that practice, it may not be improper to conſider the cauſes of the diverſity of opinion among Chriſtians on this ſubject, and the prevalence of that idea which has long been

gaining ground, that we are to be guided by expediency in regard to all external matters in religion, such as the order of churches, &c.

We have already noticed, that the abominations of the church of Rome *originated* in departing from the apostolic model; that this system was gradually established; and that good men had inadvertently promoted it, by sanctioning modes and ceremonies of human invention, which they judged expedient.

Every one knows to what a dreadful height the abuses of that church had arrived at the time of the Reformation, and we cannot be sufficiently grateful to God for raising up so many eminent men to bring about that blessed work.

The reformers, however, laboured under various disadvantages. From their education they must necessarily have been, in many respects, under the influence of prejudice. 'Many abuses,' says an able writer of the church of England *, 'lay open to the observation of men of *all* sorts; but it could hardly be credible of a sudden by men of *any* sort, that the greatest part of that structure called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation *the apostles and prophets, and Christ* himself for its corner-stone, should be a mere heap of antichristian rubbish. It is therefore no wonder, that the most enlightened of our Protestant fathers should be afraid to demolish too much. It was evident with what props and supports the

* Archdeacon Blackburne.

moſt eminent ſaints and doctors of former ages had accommodated the edifice; and theſe, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by ſuch venerable hands, without ſome good reaſon and apparent neceſſity. In thoſe days, nothing was thought to be ſufficiently confirmed by Scripture teſtimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church; and accordingly Tertullian, Chryſoſtom, Auſtin and Jerom, regularly took their places on the ſame bench of judgment with Paul, Peter, James and John *.'

Beſides the prejudices of education, the reformers were alſo expoſed to great temptations not to carry matters ſo far as perhaps they wiſhed. Religion was under the immediate cognizance of the governments of every country in which they laboured. To oppoſe the preſent ſyſtem was nearly allied to treaſon. Many prieſts who had their livings by the eſtabliſhed order of things, perceived that their craft was in danger, and were not remiſs in ſtimulating the rulers to execute the laws againſt heretics. This reduced them to one of three alternatives:—to be ſilent altogether; to denounce the whole ſyſtem of union between church and ſtate as antichriſtian; or to ſteer the middle courſe, and by not carrying matters too far, to obtain the patronage and ſupport of thoſe rulers who were either convinced by their doctrines, or who, diſguſted with the tyranny of Rome, were deſirous,

* Confeſſional.

for political reaſons, of withdrawing from its communion.

Their zeal for the cauſe in which they had embarked forbade their remaining ſilent. They lived at a period when the union of church and ſtate had ſubſiſted a thouſand years. During that time, the propriety of this incorporation had hardly ever been doubted; and it was not to be expected, that they ſhould clearly at once underſtand the propriety of ſeparating them. The middle courſe was, therefore, not only the ſafeſt for themſelves, but probably correſponded moſt with the knowledge they had attained. It was accordingly embraced. In the courſe of their diſputes with Roman Catholics, their views, it is likely, were enlarged as to the nature of the kingdom of Chriſt; but differences of opinion amongſt themſelves, the diſpoſitions of the rulers, and the prejudices of the countries in which they lived, all tended to fetter them in conduct, and to prevent their following cloſely apoſtolic practice. The apoſtles aimed merely at the converſion of individuals; *they* had in view reforming nations, and conſequently the means they employed greatly differed. The apoſtles had no proſpect of ſucceſs but in the power of the Holy Ghoſt accompanying, to the heart, the doctrine they preached. It was a great object with the reformers to gain over the magiſtrates to their party, and to turn a part, at leaſt, of the revenues of the church to the ſupport of a better ſyſtem—indeed they were

diſappointed and murmured that they did not obtain the whole.

Although the principles of the reformers naturally tended to make the word of God the ſole criterion in matters of religion, this noble ſentiment was not explicitly declared for ſome time. Had they been perſuaded of this one general principle, and purſued it to its juſt conſequences, it muſt have ſatisfied them, that nothing could juſtify the uſe of carnal weapons in ſupport of religion. But while they led the attention of men to the Scriptures, while they expoſed many of the abominations of the church of Rome, they retained the very eſſence of antichriſt, by ſeeking, and obtaining wherever they could, a civil eſtabliſhment for religion. They confounded civil liberty with that wherewith Chriſt ſets his people free. 'They inferred the lawfulneſs of reſiſting wicked and unrighteous princes, from the principles of election and grace. Calvin is ſaid to have declared the contrary to be civil idolatry; and this very doctrine was afterwards employed by Grotius to procure the Arminians the countenance of the civil government *.'

They endeavoured to expoſe the degeneracy of the church of Rome, by comparing it with ancient times; but inſtead of going back to the days of the apoſtles, and ſhewing what a church of Chriſt was in their eſtimation, they drew many of their maxims from the writings of the fathers, and the

* Confeſſional.

decrees of the firſt councils. This, in all probability, aroſe partly from not conſidering that the practice of the apoſtles was recorded to be a complete guide for the churches in every age; and partly becauſe they ſaw many of their followers ready to ſtagger at the length they had already departed from that church wherein they were educated. We have ſome inſtances in which their practice greatly differed from their avowed principles. 'The knowledge the reformers had of this matter (viz. the frequent obſervance of the Lord's ſupper, ſays Mr Randal) was agreeable to the truth; let us next conſider their practice; here, alas! was the ſhort-coming *.' They diſtinguiſhed between what was deſirable and what was attainable, and were afraid leſt by going too far they ſhould mar the whole. Inſtead of endeavouring to deſtroy prejudice by manifeſtation of the truth, they made truth, in ſome reſpects, bend to prejudice. Their oppoſers loudly demanded, Where will you ſtop? and they were in too great haſte to anſwer the queſtion, by drawing up their Confeſſions, which contained the *ne plus ultra* of reformation, beyond which neither they nor any ſince, on their plans, have ever gone.

In the different countries where the principles of the reformers were embraced, different modes of church-order and government were adopted; and ſo little acquainted were they with the rights of conſcience, that they did not heſitate to enforce

* Randal on the Lord's Supper, p. 42. laſt edition.

compliance with their modes of worſhip. Thus we ſee that ſentiment, ſo much condemned by the Holy Ghoſt, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," not merely encouraged at the Reformation by influence and argument, but men compelled to adopt the ſentiments of Luther in Germany, of Calvin at Geneva, of Knox in Scotland, and of Zuinglius in Switzerland *.

The progreſs of this ſpirit of intolerance in religion, is well deſcribed by a celebrated hiſtorian. 'Such are the capital articles in this famous Receſs, which is the baſis of religious peace in Germany, and the bond of union among its various ſtates, the ſentiments of which are ſo extremely different with reſpect to points the moſt intereſting and important. In our age and nation, to which the idea of toleration is familiar, and its beneficial effects well known, it may ſeem ſtrange that a method of terminating their diſſenſions, ſo ſuitable to the mild and charitable ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion, did not ſooner occur to the contending parties. But an expedient which, how ſalutary ſoever it might be, was repugnant to the ſentiments and practice of Chriſtians during many ages, did not lie obvious to diſcovery. Among the ancient heathens, all whoſe deities were local and tutelary, diverſity of ſentiment concerning the object or rites of religious worſhip ſeems to have been no ſource of animoſity, be-

* See Bezæ de Hæreticis a civili magiſtratu puniendis, apud Stephan. 1554.

cauſe the acknowledging veneration to be due to any one god, did not imply denial of the exiſtence or the power of any other god; nor were the modes and rites of worſhip eſtabliſhed in one country, incompatible with thoſe which other nations approved of and obſerved. Thus the errors in their ſyſtem of theology were of ſuch a nature as to be productive of concord, and notwithſtanding the amazing number of their deities, as well as the infinite variety of their ceremonies, a ſociable and tolerating ſpirit ſubſiſted almoſt univerſally in the pagan world.

'But when the Chriſtian revelation declared one Supreme Being to be the ſole object of religious veneration, preſcribed the form of worſhip moſt acceptable to him, whoever admitted the truth it held, of conſequence ſaw every other mode of religion to be abſurd and impious. Hence the zeal of the firſt converts to the Chriſtian faith in propagating its doctrines, and the ardour with which they laboured to overturn every other form of worſhip. They employed, however, for this purpoſe, no methods but ſuch as ſuited the nature of religion. By the force of powerful arguments, they convinced the underſtandings of men; by the charms of ſuperior virtue, they allured and captivated their hearts. At length the civil power declared in favour of Chriſtianity, and though numbers, imitating the example of their ſuperiors, crowded into the church, many ſtill adhered to their ancient ſuper-

ſtitions. Enraged at their obſtinacy, the miniſters of religion, whoſe zeal was ſtill unabated, though their ſanctity and virtue were much diminiſhed, forgot ſo far the nature of their own miſſion, and of the arguments which they ought to have employed, that they armed the imperial power againſt theſe unhappy men, and as they could not perſuade, they tried to compel them to believe.

'At the ſame time, controverſies concerning articles of faith multiplied, from various cauſes, among Chriſtians themſelves, and the ſame unhallowed weapons which had firſt been uſed againſt the enemies of their religion, were turned againſt each other. Every zealous diſputant endeavoured to intereſt the civil magiſtrate in his cauſe, and each in his turn employed the ſecular arm to cruſh or to exterminate his opponents. Not long after, the biſhops of Rome put in their claim to infallibility in explaining articles of faith, and deciding points in controverſy, and bold as the pretenſion was, they, by their artifices and perſeverance, impoſed on the credulity of mankind, and brought them to recognize it. To doubt or to deny any doctrine to which theſe unerring inſtructors had given the ſanction of their approbation, was held to be not only a reſiſting of truth, but an act of rebellion againſt their ſacred authority; and the ſecular power, of which by various arts they had acquired the abſolute direction, was inſtantly employed to avenge both.

'Thus Europe had been accuſtomed, during

many centuries, to ſee ſpeculative opinions propagated or defended by force; the charity and mutual forbearance which Chriſtianity recommends with ſo much warmth were forgotten, the ſacred rights of conſcience and of private judgment were unheard of, and not only the idea of toleration, but even the word itſelf, in the ſenſe now affixed to it, was unknown. A right to extirpate error by force, was univerſally allowed to be the prerogative of thoſe who poſſeſſed the knowledge of truth, and as each party of Chriſtians believed that they had got poſſeſſion of this invaluable attainment, they all claimed and exerciſed, as far as they were able, the rights which it was ſuppoſed to convey. The Roman Catholics, as their ſyſtem reſted on the deciſions of an infallible judge, never doubted that truth was on their ſide, and openly called on the civil power to repel the impious and heretical innovators who had riſen up againſt it. The Proteſtants, no leſs confident that their doctrine was well founded, required, with equal ardour, the princes of their party to check ſuch as preſumed to impugn or to oppoſe it. Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, the founders of the reformed church in their reſpective countries, inflicted, as far as they had power and opportunity, the ſame puniſhments which were denounced againſt their own diſciples by the church of Rome, on ſuch as called in queſtion any article in their creeds. To their followers, and perhaps to their opponents, it would have appeared

a ſymptom of diffidence in the goodneſs of the cauſe, or an acknowledgment that it was not well founded, if they had not employed in its defence all thoſe means which it was ſuppoſed truth had a right to employ.

'It was towards the cloſe of the ſeventeenth century, before toleration, under its preſent form, was admitted firſt into the republic of the United Provinces, and from thence introduced into England. Long experience of the calamities of mutual perſecution, the influence of free government, the light and humanity acquired by the progreſs of ſcience, together with the prudence and authority of the civil magiſtrate, were all requiſite in order to eſtabliſh a regulation ſo repugnant to the ideas which all the different ſects had adopted, from miſtaken conceptions concerning the nature of religion and the rights of truth, or which all of them had derived from the erroneous maxims eſtabliſhed by the church of Rome.

'The receſs of Augſburg, it is evident, was founded on no ſuch liberal and enlarged ſentiments concerning freedom of religious inquiry or the nature of toleration. It was nothing more than a ſcheme of pacification, which political conſiderations alone had ſuggeſted to the contending parties, and regard for their mutual tranquillity and ſafety had rendered neceſſary. Of this there can be no ſtronger proof than an article in the receſs itſelf, by which the benefits of the pacification are declared to extend only to the Catholics

on the one ſide, and to ſuch as adhered to the Confeſſion of Augſburg on the other. The followers of Zuinglius and Calvin remained, in conſequence of that excluſion, without any protection from the rigour of the laws denounced againſt heretics. Nor did they obtain any legal ſecurity until the treaty of Weſtphalia, near a century after this period, provided that they ſhould be admitted to enjoy, in as ample manner as the Lutherans, all the advantages and protection which the receſs of Augſburg affords.

'But if the followers of Luther were highly pleaſed with the ſecurity which they acquired by this receſs, ſuch as adhered to the ancient ſyſtem had no leſs reaſon to be ſatisfied with that article in it, which preſerved entire to the Roman Catholic church the benefices of ſuch eccleſiaſtics as ſhould hereafter renounce its doctrines. This article, known in Germany by the name of the Eccleſiaſtical Reſervation, was manifeſtly ſo conformable to the idea and to the rights of an eſtabliſhed church, and it appeared ſo equitable to prevent revenues, which had been originally appropriated for the maintenance of perſons attached to a certain ſyſtem, from being alienated to any other purpoſe, that the Proteſtants, though they foreſaw its conſequences, were obliged to relinquiſh their oppoſition to it. As the Roman Catholic princes of the empire have taken care to ſee this article exactly obſerved in every caſe where there was an opportunity of putting it in

execution, it has proved the great barrier of the Romiſh church in Germany againſt the Reformation; and as from this period the ſame temptation of intereſt did not allure eccleſiaſtics to relinquiſh the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem, there have been few of that order who have loved truth with ſuch diſintereſted and ardent affection as to abandon, for its ſake, the rich benefices which they had in poſſeſſion *.'

In every country where the reformed principles were embraced, a confeſſion minutely ſtating every thing reſpecting religion was drawn up. Theſe confeſſions were conſidered to be of the higheſt authority, and the zeal of Chriſtians was much directed to maintain the authority of their ſtandards. To differ materially from what had been adopted, was accounted hereſy, and this was attended with ſerious conſequences. The following celebrated paſſage in the Weſtminſter Confeſſion of Faith, ſhews how little progreſs had been made in the knowledge of religious liberty for a hundred and twenty years *. It is declared, chap. xxiii. 'That the civil magiſtrate has a right to take order that unity and peace be preſerved in the church; that

* See Robertſon's Hiſtory of Charles V. vol. iv. p. 201,—208. 2d edit. 8vo.

† Luther publicly burned the decretals and canons by which the Pope's ſupremacy was eſtabliſhed, and alſo the bull iſſued againſt him at Wittemberg, Dec. 10. 1520. He was publicly expelled from the church, at Rome, by Leo X. on the 6th of January 1521.—The firſt meeting of the Aſſembly of Divines was held in Henry VII.'s Chapel at Weſtminſter, July 1. 1643.

the truth of God be preserved pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline be prevented and reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed; for the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatever is transacted be according to the word of God.' It is abundantly evident how much this system is calculated to perpetuate error, by checking inquiry. It inevitably also lays the foundation of numberless divisions, for it is impossible that Christians can be truly united except on the ground of truth. Error must necessarily gender strife; and there is in the mind of man a principle of opposition to constraint in regard to opinions, which, unless amidst gross ignorance, has always, upon these subjects, set force at defiance *.

In the conduct of the reformers, then, we have

* 'Charles V. after abdicating his throne, was peculiarly curious with regard to the construction of clocks and watches, and having found, after repeated trials, that he could not bring any two of them to go exactly alike, he reflected, it is said, with a mixture of surprise and regret on his own folly, in having bestowed so much time and labour on the more vain attempt of bringing mankind to a precise uniformity of sentiment, concerning the intricate and mysterious doctrines of religion.'—Dr Robertson's Charles V. vol. iv. p. 313. The remark is perfectly just; uniformity of sentiment in religion can never be produced by human authority. It can only arise from mens consciences being brought into subjection to the authority of God, and from their diligently studying his word to know his will.

the origin of that variety of ſentiments which has abounded amongſt Chriſtians in regard to religion, and eſpecially as to modes of worſhip and diſcipline. Although each party profeſſed to find the outlines of their ſyſtem in the word of God, yet none pretended that the New Teſtament contained a full and complete model. Indeed, without going back to what Paul calls the weak and beggarly elements, they never could have ſuppoſed that Scripture authoriſed, far leſs commanded, that the civil magiſtrate ſhould interfere in regulating religion. If this eſſential part of their ſyſtem was not merely omitted but diſcountenanced by the whole tenor of the New Teſtament, they could not conſider it as a complete and unerring guide. They bound men, however, to the moſt minute adherence to their ſtandards; and it is to be obſerved of them, as of all who have vindicated perſecution, that this was directed more againſt deviation from their forms and modes, than againſt groſs ſins. While they all endeavoured to promote perfect uniformity at home, they found it neceſſary to cultivate a friendly intercourſe with each other, in different countries, from an apprehenſion of the dangers to which they were expoſed by the church of Rome. Their deſcendents, anxious to defend the Proteſtant intereſt againſt the attacks of the Catholics, who had no ſmall advantage againſt them from the variety of opinions they held, began more explicitly to maintain, that greater latitude was given in Scrip-

ture reſpecting church-order, and that it was very much left to the prudence of men, and to the circumſtances in which they were placed.

The Eraſtians, as they are called, maintained, that all diſcipline was left perfectly uninſtituted, and that the civil government in each country might regulate this as they judged proper. Some accidental circumſtances tended alſo to blind the minds both of the reformers and of the princes who favoured them. The Anabaptiſts at Munſter maintained that magiſtrates had no authority in the church; but they denied alſo their authority over the ſaints even in civil matters. The abſurd ſentiments of theſe fanatics, and the exceſſes of which they were guilty, were calculated to prejudice men againſt any appearance of conformity to their ſentiments.

On conſidering all circumſtances, we have abundant cauſe to be thankful, that the reformers eſcaped ſo far from the prejudices of education; but inſtead of preſſing forward, their deſcendents have been contented to walk by their light. The veneration in which their memory has been held, has prejudiced the great bulk of the people againſt any deviation from their ſentiments, and the reſpectable and lucrative ſituations which adherence to eſtabliſhed religion has ſecured, and which departing from it muſt forfeit, has tempted many not to purſue their views of truth ſo far as otherwiſe they might have done. The ſpeculations alſo of good men reſpecting the uſefulneſs of the

ſituations in which they are placed, which they muſt relinquiſh if they fully adopt the apoſtolic plan, has proved a great hindrance.

Although the diverſity of opinion among Chriſtians concerning church-order may thus be ſo eaſily accounted for from the ſituation in which they have been placed, and from their veneration for the firſt reformers, yet nothing has tended more to confirm the prejudices of men on the ſubject, than this diverſity. The exemplary conduct, the zeal and holineſs of men in churches where there is no ſcriptural order, which cannot be denied, have been brought forward to ſhew that this was a matter of little conſequence. This argument would equally militate againſt the Reformation. Aſſuredly there were, and ſtill are eminently holy men in the corrupt communion of the church of Rome. We ought to love the image of Chriſt wherever we ſee it; and if we confine our love to our own party, we deceive ourſelves. If we love the Lord Jeſus, we muſt love thoſe who are guided by his Spirit. When we ſee a man loving the goſpel, dead to the world, deſirous of promoting the glory of God, not ſeeking his own things, but the things which are Jeſus Chriſt's—we cannot but feel our hearts knit to him, wherever he be. A man may, on the other hand, agree with us about the external order of a church, and yet we may be ſatisfied that he is deſtitute of real religion, or at leaſt very lukewarm. Another may, in our judgment, be acting erroneouſly in conti-

nuing connected with an antichriſtian eſtabliſhment, and yet we may be conſtrained to love him for the truth's ſake. But although there are Chriſtians eminently holy in unſcriptural ſocieties, and others who are not exemplary in churches which follow the apoſtolic practices, we ought not on that account to conſider church-order to be unimportant, or unconnected with ſpirituality and holineſs, any more than we ſhould conclude that freſh air or cleanlineſs are not ſubſervient to health, becauſe we find ſome very ſtout children in the confined dirty lanes of a great city, and others ſickly in the pure air of the country.

The diſproportionate zeal diſcovered by ſome reſpecting church-government, has doubtleſs alſo tended to blind the minds of Chriſtians, and has prevented them from conſidering the ſubject with the attention it deſerves. They have ſeen ſome very zealous in thoſe matters, who were little concerned to manifeſt or to promote the power of religion. The end of all God's commandments is love; and wherever the mind is diverted from following after holineſs and ſpirituality of mind, by attention to order, we are turning the law of God againſt itſelf, and abuſing the Scriptures. We are not ſerving the Lord Jeſus, but our own vanity, party-ſpirit, and ſelfiſhneſs. All church-order is ordained for a certain purpoſe, and if this be not kept in view, it becomes mere bodily exerciſe. A church may boaſt of its acting in conformity to the apoſtolic model. Like that at

Laodicea, they may say, "We are rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing, while in fact they are wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked," in a great measure destitute of the experience and power of religion in the hearts of the members. In such cases, their order has become the righteousness in which they trust—"The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we." To such we may apply our Lord's words, "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." If we trust in our creed, our prayers, our tears, our sanctification, our good works, they are all abominable before God; but without them we cannot be Christians.

We may, in like manner, pervert the order established by Jesus Christ, but we cannot follow him fully without observing it, and although we may be Christians while inattentive to this, by neglecting his least commandments we shall suffer loss in our souls, and are proportionally little in the kingdom of God. The pains taken in training a new regiment would be ridiculous parade if not connected with its object. It is valuable only as it fits the soldiers for actual service. The discipline of a church, in like manner, is important only as it promotes watchfulness, circumspection, and love in the members. This was the end of its institution, and we shall never attain the end so well by forsaking the appointed means, or by substituting others in their place.

A body of men ſuddenly called together, may individually poſſeſs all the qualities eſſential to good ſoldiers, but if not properly trained to act together, they will diſappoint expectation in the day of battle. A company of real Chriſtians, unacquainted with ſcriptural order, exactly reſemble them. They are real ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt; but not being accuſtomed to that diſcipline, cooperation, and fellowſhip which he has enjoined, many defects will appear in their daily conduct, which this would have corrected.

Another circumſtance alſo may be mentioned, which gives riſe to this difference of opinion. Man is ever prone to extremes. His mind is narrow, and is apt to be excluſively filled with one object. One man's attention is engroſſed with ſuperintending the order of a few Chriſtians meeting in an upper chamber. Another beholds multitudes of immortal ſouls periſhing for lack of knowledge; his ſoul is drawn out in prayers and efforts for their ſalvation; he goes forth preaching the everlaſting goſpel, gladly deſiring to ſpend and to be ſpent for Chriſt. He is filled with indignation at the ſmall company, who ſeem deſirous merely that they themſelves ſhould win Chriſt; his zeal perhaps carries him too far, and becauſe he ſees them deficient in ſome things, he diſregards what is praiſe-worthy. He perceives that there muſt be ſome kind of order in a church, but not having attended particularly to the ſubject, or finding it impoſſible to obſerve the order

of the firſt churches in his preſent connexion, and determined not to abandon what he conſiders to be a great ſphere of uſefulneſs, he treats it as a matter of indifference.

The New Teſtament ſhews us, that the apoſtles united zeal for the converſion of ſinners, with ſtrict attention to the welfare of believers. They publiſhed the goſpel to every creature, and when ſome believed and others believed not, they then ſeparated the diſciples, and formed them into diſtinct ſocieties, Acts xix. 9. Let us imitate both parts of their conduct. We ſhall ever find, that attention to the practices of the churches in the New Teſtament, will tend to promote zeal for the converſion of ſinners, unleſs it engroſs too much of our attention, unleſs we forget the object for which it is appointed, or unleſs, by expecting too much from the means, we put them in the place of Chriſt and of the end. In this caſe it is no wonder if our ſouls decay, and all our exertions for ſpreading the goſpel be completely paralyſed.

Good men have always contended for the importance of the great doctrines of Chriſt, and on this account have been charged by the world with bigotry and party-ſpirit, for attaching ſo much importance to matters which ignorant men conſider to be purely ſpeculative, and little, if at all connected with practice. Such charges, however, have not led the real diſciples of Chriſt to undervalue the truth of God. They know that they proceed from indifference about religion, and

from diſpleaſure that this indifference is reproved by the reſpect of others for the authority of God. But many good men, adopting an improper diſtinction between doctrine and diſcipline, have ſhunned diſcuſſion on the order appointed by Chriſt for the government of his church, and have been as liberal in the application of the charge of bigotry, &c. to ſuch as regarded his authority on this ſubject, as the world has been towards them on account of their reſpect to what are called the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel.

If the order of the churches be really diſtinct from what Chriſt taught, the leſs attention we pay to it the better. But before we adopt the diſtinction, and argue for the importance of the one, and the inſignificance of the other, we ought to ſhew that Chriſt has taught, and directed his apoſtles to teach, nothing concerning the order and government of his churches. No Chriſtian, I preſume, will attempt to do ſo. Now, whether any thing which he or they taught may be ſet aſide, or conſidered at beſt as too trifling to merit our ſolemn attention, will not ſurely be queſtioned by Chriſtians.

Doctrine and diſcipline are indeed but words, and I do not wiſh to contend merely about words; but words are the means by which we communicate our ideas, and the improper uſe of them has been the great cauſe of diſputes both in religion and philoſophy.

Good men perceive the importance of juſt

views of truth, and therefore contend for purity of doctrine. The world conſiders it of little conſequence what we believe, provided we be but charitable; that is, provided we be indifferent about our creed. How much does the conduct of ſome Chriſtians reſemble this! They ſay church-order is of little or no importance, provided a man be not a bigot; that is, provided he be not perſuaded that the order he follows is excluſively of divine appointment, and binding on all believers.

There is, no doubt, ſuch a thing as bigotry. Dr Johnſon defines it, 'Blind zeal, prejudice, unreaſonable warmth in favour of party or opinions.' If this be a juſt account of bigotry, provided a man's zeal for a particular form of church-order be founded on knowledge, his zeal is not *blind;* conſequently he is no bigot. If his opinions and practice be the reſult of candid inveſtigation, they do not ariſe from *prejudice;* he is, therefore, not a bigot. Further, if his warmth in favour of a party be not unreaſonable; if he adopt proper methods to diſſeminate his ſentiments; if he do not attach *undue* importance to any particular opinion, according to this definition, which ſeems a juſt one, he is not a bigot.

If any man, indeed, ſhall earneſtly contend for a certain order or form of government to be obſerved in the churches becauſe it is new, without ſeriouſly examining the Scriptures on the ſubject, and impartially attending to the objections brought againſt his ſyſtem, we admit the propriety of

applying the term *bigotry* to his conduct. If he be a zealous Presbyterian or Independent, because his father, or some eminent man to whom he looks up, was so, we do not defend him. If his zeal for Christianity *chiefly* appear in minute attention to external order, we are far from attempting to vindicate him: we should, on the contrary, warn such of the danger of being occupied with a form of godliness, or of giving heed to questions which gender strife, rather than godly edifying; for however important the subject be in itself, it may be perverted, and will, in that event, be extremely injurious to his soul. If his attachment to a particular system prevent him from cherishing love to all the disciples of Jesus for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them, his conduct is undoubtedly unscriptural; but if he has seriously, and with earnest prayer, examined the Scriptures on the order and discipline proper to be observed in a church of Christ; if, after weighing objections, he be persuaded that a certain order is exclusively appointed by God, and if he attend to this himself, and recommend it to others, with a view to promote spirituality of mind and holiness of life, while he loves all the disciples of Jesus, although he judge them, in some respects, not to be walking according to the rule of God's word, he is no bigot, nor can he be justly charged as actuated by party-spirit. Such a man will ever be ready calmly to hear what can be said against his system. He has not contrived

it himſelf, nor received it by tradition from his fathers, but conſiders it to be a part of divine revelation, and being perſuaded that he is always prone to err, and that error of every kind muſt have a bad effect upon his mind, he is ready to receive with thankfulneſs farther light upon the ſubject, and to hear with patience what may be candidly and ſeriouſly ſaid for his information.

A man may be a bigotted Calviniſt. From education, or from his mind having been much employed on the points of difference between that and other ſyſtems, his whole converſation may turn on theſe topics; he may loſe his temper when contradicted, he may wreſt paſſages of Scripture leſt they ſhould ſeem to favour his opponents, and he may plainly ſhew that he is under the influence of prejudice and blind zeal: but a man may be fully perſuaded of the truth of the ſyſtem called Calviniſm, and be deeply convinced of its importance, without meriting the reproach of bigotry. The ſame will hold true concerning church-government. A man may contend for a particular form in an unchriſtian and bigotted manner. If an Independent, he may be attached to all who hold the ſame ſentiments, without examining what good effect their church-order has produced on their minds, or whether they are ſtudying to maintain the power of religion. If he be of the eſtabliſhed church, he may adviſe others to attend their pariſh miniſters, although the goſpel be not preached by them; thus preferring the eſtabliſh-

ments and arrangements of men, to the doctrine of Chriſt. In either caſe he may well be called a bigot. Another may be more ſenſible of the importance of ſcriptural order, which he may obſerve, and ſteadily maintain that all Chriſtians are bound to obſerve it, without the ſmalleſt tincture of party-ſpirit.

I dwell the more upon this ſubject, becauſe due attention has not been paid to it. The ſpirit of intolerance manifeſted by our fathers, and their zeal for what we now plainly ſee to be unſcriptural, has rendered it popular to declaim againſt attention to church-order, under the odious name of party-ſpirit. Good men deſpiſe the charge of party-ſpirit brought againſt them by a Socinian. They pity his ignorance. Let them beware, leſt, while charging their Chriſtian brethren with party-ſpirit, becauſe they argue in favour of an excluſive form of church-government, they ignorantly condemn or diſcourage attention to a ſubject which God has been pleaſed explicitly to reveal.

How often is a ſmile, or a remark on the pernicious effects of bigotry, put in place of argument when this ſubject is mentioned! By ſome, thoſe who moſt heartily deſpiſe all concern about any particular form of church-government, are often moſt applauded. Whence does this proceed? A perſon who was never eſteemed a bigot, in anſwer to a letter wherein the writer had been ſhewing his liberality by condemning thoſe who attended to diſcipline and church-order, obſerved,

'that thoſe only (who poſſeſſed any information on the ſubject) deſpiſed church-order, whoſe ſituation rendered their obſervance of the apoſtolic order impracticable.' Let us not then be led away by ſounds. Men ought, by means of candid examination of Scripture, to be fully perſuaded in their own minds, what to omit, and what to perform. Without this, no religious duty is a reaſonable ſervice.

When, inſtead of ſearching the Scriptures, and praying for farther light, as new born babes deſiring the unadulterated milk of the word, we are inclined to ſearch for arguments to juſtify our own practice, theſe will not be wanting. This ſtate of mind foſters prejudices. Our ſcruples, which, if attended to, would have led us to the Scriptures and to a throne of grace, and ultimately, by the bleſſing of God, to the path of duty, being ſtifled, wear away. The leſs a man liſtens to the voice of conſcience, the feebler it becomes. Many rejoice in having got rid of what they now conſider to be weak ſcruples. Let them examine *how* they got rid of them. Was it by fairly meeting the objections which occurred to their minds? Was it by ſearching the ſubject to the bottom? or was it by acting in oppoſition to their convictions? Scruples may be got rid of both ways. Thoſe who have received a religious education, feel many ſcruples before they can run to the ſame exceſs of riot with others; but when once fairly initiated, theſe ſcruples appear weak

and childiſh, and they hug themſelves on their ſuppoſed ſuperiority to weak prejudices.

I do not here intend to enlarge on the bad effects which ariſe from the differences among Chriſtians about church-order. Some of them have been already hinted at. We know what a handle they give to infidels, and to thoſe who are indifferent about religion; what alienation of mind they produce among real Chriſtians; and how much they cramp their united exertions: and however much good men, deploring theſe conſequences, may endeavour to put a ſtop to them by enforcing mutual forbearance, from the conſideration of the inconſiderable nature of their differences, experience may teach us that this will never ſucceed.

To prove, then, that the Scriptures contain a particular ſtandard and model for the imitation and government of the churches of Chriſt, which all Chriſtians are enjoined by divine authority to follow, (however they may be branded as perpetuating diviſion and party-ſpirit) will be found to be the only way by which union and brotherly love can be promoted amongſt Chriſtians. For this union God has made proviſion in the accounts of the churches in the New Teſtament. In this, as in other reſpects, the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than man. Let him then that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

SECTION I.

WHEREVER the apoſtles went, they preached the goſpel, and beſought and enjoined men to repent and believe it. When their preaching was ſucceſsful, they directed their converts to aſſociate for the obſervance of public worſhip and ordinances, always on the firſt day of the week, and alſo at other times. Theſe ſocieties were called churches. In this they have been imitated by all Chriſtians. But it is not ſufficient to retain appearances. In order to follow their example, our churches muſt reſemble theirs; their conſtitution muſt be ſimilar. How much did the church of Rome, in the apoſtle Paul's time, differ from the church of Rome ſome hundred years afterwards! Obedience to the commandment of Chriſt does not conſiſt in preſerving the name while we do not obſerve the ordinance itſelf. We condemn the Roman Catholics, who profeſs to obſerve Chriſt's dying commandment while the great bulk of the people receive only

the bread. We say this is not to eat the Lord's supper, because while the name is kept up, the action is different. The same will apply to the constitution of a church. Our churches must be similar to those planted by the apostles, and acknowledged in the word of God as his churches; we do not otherwise attend to the ordinance at all.

The word εκκλησια, *church*, means an assembly of any kind. It is often applied to Israel, which formed one assembly in the wilderness, as their males did three times a-year at Jerusalem. It is sometimes applied to an assembly called by a magistrate, and sometimes to a tumultuous assembly. In Acts xix. 32. the mob is called *the church*, and again in verse 40. he dismissed *the church*. Verse 39. the same word is used for an assembly called by the magistrates. I shall here quote a passage from Dr Campbell on this subject. 'Properly there is, in the New Testament, but two original senses of the word εκκλησια, which can be called different, though related. One is, when it denotes a number of people actually assembled, or accustomed to assemble together, and is then properly rendered by the English terms, congregation, convention, assembly, and even sometimes crowd, as in Acts xix. 32. 40. The other sense is to denote a society united together by some common tie, though not convened, perhaps not convenable, in one place. And in this acceptation, as well as in the former,

it ſometimes occurs in claſſical writers, as ſignifying a ſtate, or commonwealth, and nearly correſponding to the Latin *civitas*. When the word is limited, or appropriated, as it generally is in the New Teſtament, by its regimen, as τȣ θεȣ, τȣ κυριȣ, τȣ Χριστȣ, or by the ſcope of the place, it is always to be explained in one or other of the two ſenſes following, correſponding to the two general ſenſes above mentioned. It denotes either a ſingle congregation of Chriſtians, in correſpondence to the firſt, or the whole Chriſtian community, in correſpondence to the ſecond. We can hardly ever be at a loſs to know from the context which of the two is implied. That it is in the former acceptation, is ſometimes evident from the words in conſtruction, as της εκκλησιας τη εν Κεγχρεαις, and τη εκκλησια τȣ θεȣ τη εν Κορινθω, and the like. In the latter ſenſe it ought always to be underſtood, when we find nothing in the expreſſion, or in the ſcope of the paſſage, to determine us to limit it; for inſtance in the following, Επι ταυτη τη πετρα οικοδομησω μȣ την εκκλησιαν. Ὁ κυριος προσετιθει τȣς σωζομενȣς καθ' ἡμεραν τη εκκλησια. In this laſt acceptation of the word, for the whole body of Chriſt's diſciples, whereſoever diſperſed, it came afterwards to be diſtinguiſhed by the epithet καθολικη. They ſaid, ἡ εκκλησια ἡ καθολικη, the catholic or univerſal church.

'But in any intermediate ſenſe, between a ſingle congregation and the whole community of Chriſtians, not one inſtance can be brought of the

application of the word in ſacred writ. We ſpeak now, indeed, (and this has been the manner for ages) of the Gallican church, the Greek church, the church of England, the church of Scotland, as of ſocieties independent and complete in themſelves. Such a phraſeology was never adopted in the days of the apoſtles. They did not ſay the church of Aſia, or the church of Macedonia, or the church of Achaia, but the churches of God in Aſia, the churches in Macedonia, the churches in Achaia. The plural number is invariably uſed when more congregations than one are ſpoken of, unleſs the ſubject be the whole commonwealth of Chriſt. Nor is this the manner of the penmen of ſacred writ only. It is the conſtant uſage of the term in the writings of eccleſiaſtic authors, for the two firſt centuries. The only inſtance to the contrary that I remember to have obſerved, is in the epiſtles of Ignatius, on which I have already remarked *.

'It adds conſiderable ſtrength to our argument, that this is exactly conformable to the uſage, in regard to this term, which had always obtained among the Jews. The whole nation, or commonwealth of Iſrael, was often denominated, πασα ἡ εκκλησια Ισραηλ. And after the revolt of the ten tribes, when they ceaſed to make one people or ſtate with the other two, we hear of πασα ἡ εκκλη-

* The Doctor does not reject the epiſtles of Ignatius as altogether ſpurious, but thinks they are of no authority, as it is evident they are conſiderably mutilated.

σια Ιυδα. This is the large or comprehenſive uſe of the word, as above obſerved. In regard to the more confined application, the ſame term εκκλησια, was alſo employed to denote a number of people, either actually aſſembled, or wont to aſſemble, in the ſame place. Thus all belonging to the ſame ſynagogue were called indifferently εκκλησια, or συναγωγη, as theſe terms in the Jewiſh uſe were nearly ſynonymous. But never did they call the people belonging to ſeveral neighbouring ſynagogues εκκλησια, or συναγωγη, in the ſingular number, but εκκλησιαι and συναγωγαι, in the plural. Any other uſe in the apoſtles, therefore, muſt have been as unprecedented and unnatural as it would have been improper, and what could not fail to lead their hearers or readers into miſtakes *.'

The apoſtolic churches were collected by the preaching of the goſpel. The apoſtles were ſo far from having any authority by which to induce or to compel men thus to unite, that they were expoſed to conſtant and powerful oppoſition in their work. Inſtruction and perſuaſion were the only means they employed. By manifeſtation of the truth they commended themſelves to every man's conſcience. They beſought men to be reconciled to God, and to give themſelves up to him who had ſhed his blood for the guilty.

Although every bleſſing beſtowed upon belie-

* Campbell's Lectures on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, vol. i. p. 203. —206.

vers is freely given them of God, yet the Lord Jeſus always beſtows theſe on his people, in the way of obedience to his commandments. It is with his own, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, that we ſerve him; yet he graciouſly rewards our ſervices. Our obſervance of ordinances is an act of obedience to Chriſt, and we receive a preſent reward in the benefit and comfort we derive from them.

The end of the inſtitution of a church is abundantly manifeſt. God ſays to his people, "Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, and I will receive you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters." Jeſus delivers his people from the preſent evil world, and commands them to aſſociate together, that they may have fellowſhip with himſelf and with each other. Thus was Noah ſeparated in the ark from the world which periſhed; Lot was ſeparated from Sodom; Abraham from his kindred; and Iſrael after the fleſh from the nations. "Lo," ſaid Balaam, "the people ſhall dwell alone, and ſhall not be reckoned among the nations." The ordinances of worſhip delivered to them, precluded their intercourſe with their neighbours. Their learning the ways of the heathen, was the cauſe of many ſevere judgments which they endured.

In like manner, if any one will come after Jeſus, he muſt deny himſelf, take up his croſs, and follow him. He muſt remember Lot's wife, and not look back on the world. He muſt love the diſciples of Jeſus, cultivate their friendſhip,

and mutually give and receive every act of kindness. To promote love to Christ and to one another, they are to unite in church-fellowship, to watch over one another in love, and to observe together various ordinances. Thus having forsaken all for Christ, they receive an hundred fold in the present life. Every one who is a subject of the King of Sion is their kinsman and brother; and the comfort of the Holy Ghost which they enjoy while walking in the fear of the Lord and associating with his people, amply compensates for the loss of friends or of worldly comforts which they have sustained.

The disciples of Jesus are surrounded with enemies on every hand, and one great end of the formation of a church is, that they may strengthen one another in the good ways of the Lord. "Two are better than one; for if one fall, the other will help him; but wo to him who is alone when he falleth."

The members of a church are bound to esteem one another as brethren, yea, as members one of another; for they are one body, which is represented by their eating the same bread, 1 Cor. x. 17.* A church is a representation of the general assembly or church above, and in proportion as the members walk in love, holding the

* Οτι εις αρτος εν σωμα οι πολλοι εσμεν, *Because* (or rather, *as*) *there is one bread, we being many are one body.* The common translation conveys no meaning, "For we being many are one bread," &c. See Whitby and Macknight.

unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace, the reſemblance is exact. Chriſtians are bound to love all who love Jeſus Chriſt. The formation of a particular church, and the ſpecial duties to the members thereof, by no means preclude us from expreſſing general affection for all the Iſrael of God.

The more we exerciſe love to our brethren with whom we dwell, the more will our love increaſe to the whole body. Chriſtian love muſt not only be in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. We have little or no opportunity of doing good to the great body of Chriſtians whom we never ſaw, nor ſhall ſee in the fleſh; but a church is a ſingle branch of the great family of God, and in this connexion we have a ſpecial opportunity of teſtifying by actions our love to the brethren of Jeſus. We are to rebuke and admoniſh one another, by no means ſuffering ſin upon our brother. If we were ſeeking honour one of another; if this were our governing principle, as it is in ſocieties of worldly men, ſuch conduct would ſoon gender ſtrife; but the more the ordinances of Chriſt are attended to in a church of Chriſt, from proper motives, the more will the members be united in love. The Lord hath beſtowed a variety of gifts on his people, and they are bound to uſe them for each other's benefit. The exiſtence of a church gives an opportunity of occupying theſe talents for the common good, and thus the edification of the body

is promoted, by every man, as he hath received the gift, miniſtering the ſame as a good ſteward of the manifold grace of God.

A Chriſtian church is not only calculated to promote the edification of Chriſtians, but the converſion of ſinners. We have ſeen that the formation of churches is intended to promote love amongſt Chriſtians. This is cloſely connected with the converſion of the world. Jeſus prayed that his diſciples might be one, that the world might believe that the Father had ſent him, John xvii. 21. A church is a city ſet on a hill; a light in the world to direct the attention of men to the teſtimony of Chriſt's death, reſurrection, and ſecond coming. When the members of a church are not ſpiritual, holy, and exemplary, this end is in a great meaſure defeated; but if they make their light to ſhine before men, others, ſeeing their good works, will glorify their Father in heaven. Such, it is evident from the New Teſtament, was the end of the inſtitution of the apoſtolic churches.

The apoſtles held out no worldly motive to induce men to become Chriſtians, or to connect themſelves with a church. They obtained no civil privileges by doing ſo. The connexion was perfectly voluntary in regard to man. It was regard alone to the authority of an unſeen Saviour, and to eternal things, which led them to enter into it. If they diſregarded theſe, they were anſwerable to Chriſt alone. No man had

a right to punish them. God still caused his sun to shine, and his rain to descend on them, and thus taught his people to do them good as they had opportunity. When the scheme of uniting the church and the world took possession of the minds of men, they permitted no man to buy or sell except he had the mark of the beast, or they suspended this decree by an act of toleration; but every thing of this kind is foreign to a church of Christ as exhibited in Scripture. It is an association which has no head upon earth; which, as a body, can receive no laws from any one but Christ Jesus. Those who joined the apostolic churches were not thereby freed from their obligations to honour and to be subject to the powers whom God hath ordained over the things of a present life. The kingdom of Jesus is spiritual, neither interfering with human governments, nor admitting their interference in its peculiar concerns. The Lord taught his disciples to render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and to God the things which are God's; that is, to obey their civil governors in all civil matters, but in religion to acknowledge no human authority.

In attending to the constitution of the apostolic churches, we must observe that Christ is always represented as ruling over a willing people, and governing by love. Love to him and to one another, was the perfect bond, and the only one by which the churches were united. When any auxiliary bond is employed in a society, it no

longer reſembles the apoſtolic churches; its conſtitution is different. 'They are miſtaken,' ſays Dr Erſkine, 'who think that the outer-court, Rev. xi. 1, 2. repreſents the viſible church. For the church, conſidered as inwardly the habitation of God, and outwardly employed in his worſhip, is repreſented by the temple and inner-court, where was the altar, and where the Iſraelites worſhipped. But the outer-court repreſents a corrupt ſociety, aſſuming the name of the church, whoſe pretenſions God will demonſtrate to be falſe, and which he will give up to be trodden down by her enemies. This may be the reaſon why the angel commiſſioned to meaſure the temple, was prohibited to meaſure the outer-court, becauſe that outer-court was properly no part of the temple *.'

It is not ſurpriſing, then, that the apoſtles inſiſted ſo much on brotherly-love. Every ordinance they delivered is calculated to promote it; and where love was not promoted, the end of the ordinance was not obtained. How different were theſe ſocieties from the world! There, men live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another, yet are kept together by ſelf-intereſt and temporal ties. In the apoſtolic churches, love to Chriſt cemented them together, and when this was wanting, no ſubſtitute was recommended. Human governments only aim at regulating the conduct. The wholeſome laws under which we live

* Theological Diſſertations, p. 94. Lond. 1765.

in this country, ſecure our lives and properties in the midſt of wickedneſs. The laws delivered to the churches reſpected the ſtate of their hearts as well as their external conduct; and if the hearts of the members were not right, the outward reſtraints were too feeble to prevent open rebellion againſt Chriſt. He is not ſo careful about the appearance as the reality; and the freedom he gives his people in their aſſociated character, is calculated to prove a ſtumbling-block to wicked men, and to make them manifeſt.

Under every human government men muſt part with a portion of their natural freedom, which is well exchanged for the ſecurity and the bleſſings it provides. This is not the caſe in the churches of the ſaints. The members neither become ſubject, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to any individual, nor to the whole body of their brethren. The apoſtles warned and exhorted them to ſtand faſt in the glorious liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free; to remember one was their maſter, even Chriſt; to him alone they are accountable; to his laws alone they are ſubject. Their brethren do not become the lords of their conſciences; while they are all to be clothed with humility, to eſteem others better than themſelves, yea, all to be ſubject one to another—they are on no account to deviate from what appears to themſelves to be duty: "Whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin." As to any thing in itſelf indifferent, neither oppoſite to the ſpirit of the goſpel, nor to any precept

delivered by the apoſtles, ſuch as the eating of meats in the firſt churches, there they are their own maſters, and in ſuch a caſe, although a thing be lawful, it may not be expedient. They muſt not therefore pleaſe themſelves; but if they are prevented from attending to any thing which appears to them to be their duty, either by the opinion of an individual or of a church, they are evidently ſeeking to pleaſe men, and are no longer the ſervants of Chriſt.

Men void of religion may frame a civil government. They may chuſe ſuch an one as they think beſt; but the apoſtles taught believers to conſider themſelves the ſervants of Jeſus. As ſuch they entered a church, and conſequently no laws in that church muſt interfere with their allegiance to him. To prevent this, the apoſtles delivered laws which they were to obey in their aſſociated ſtate, and theſe were neither to be increaſed, nor diminiſhed, nor changed.

If any number of people form a voluntary ſociety, they may exclude or receive whom they pleaſe; but ſuch were not the inſtructions of the apoſtles to the churches. If any one deſired to join them, they were to inquire whether Chriſt had received him? and if ſo, to give him the right hand of fellowſhip—for church-fellowſhip is an ordinance for *all* his people. Did it appear by the conduct of a member that they had been miſtaken; that he was not living in ſubjection to

the authority of Chriſt, the church was then, and then only, to exclude him.

A member of the apoſtolic churches might withdraw when he pleaſed; he might thus caſt off the authority of Chriſt: all that his brethren could do, was to warn him of the conſequences; and if he perſiſted, to behave towards him as a heathen man and a publican. It is evident, then, that this connexion, being founded on ſubjection of mind to Jeſus Chriſt, was capable of being maintained without many regulations which are abſolutely neceſſary in civil ſociety. It is, therefore, no objection to the conſtitution of the churches of Chriſt, that it would not anſwer in civil matters. It was not intended to do ſo. A form of government ſuch as that of the churches of ſaints, is not fit for wicked men, nor even for merely moral men, not under the influence of the goſpel. The kingdom which the apoſtles ſought to eſtabliſh, was righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt. Whatever ordinances tend to promote theſe, they, under the influence of the Spirit, delivered to the churches; and any addition, however plauſible, will have a contrary effect.

Many Chriſtians have groſsly erred on this ſubject. They have been guided in their views of the government of the churches, by their political opinions. No wonder that men of the world have fallen into the ſame error. 'No biſhop, no king,' ſaid King James I. Whatever

form of church-order is adopted on ſuch principles, is equally abſurd. That the biſhop ſhould govern with unlimited ſway, is not more ſo than that the people ſhould be ſubjected to the authority of the elders; and that the people ſhould govern themſelves, is fully as oppoſite as either to the apoſtolic inſtitutions. Chriſtians are ſubjects of a king. Jeſus has, by his apoſtles, delivered the laws by which his ſubjects ſhall be governed, and informed us how theſe laws are to be adminiſtered. The more we attend to his will, the more of his countenance and approbation may we expect to receive.

Section II.

In oppoſition to the view given of the word "church," ſome have endeavoured to ſhew, that by a church in the New Teſtament is ſometimes meant the elders, whom they call the repreſentatives of the whole body; but this is not only completely void of proof, but directly contrary both to the letter and ſpirit of the paſſages where the word occurs. We find the people called the church, excluſive of the elders, Acts xv. 22. but never are the elders ſo denoted without the people.

'One of the natural conſequences,' ſays Dr Campbell, 'of all thoſe great diſtinctions of

the sacred order was, that they made way for another, by which the ministers of religion, in a manner, appropriated the term church to themselves. I have had occasion, in these lectures, to lay before you the only undoubted acceptations wherein I find the word εκκλησια employed in the New Testament, and have observed, that when applied to the disciples of Christ, it always denotes either the whole Christian community, or all those of a particular congregation, under the guidance of their own pastors. I have also pointed out one deviation from the latter of these original meanings, naturally consequent on the change that in a few centuries ensued, when the bishop, instead of the oversight of one congregation, had the superintendancy of many congregations; that is, when his one congregation, on account of the increase of proselytes, was split into several, and when the habit of applying the word in the singular number to the whole of a bishop's charge, prevailed over strict propriety, and the primitive use of the term. This prepared men for a still farther extension of the name to all the congregations of a province under the same metropolitan, and afterwards to all those of a civil diocese under the same patriarch or exarch.

'I now intend to point out another still more remarkable deviation; a deviation not from the latter, as those now mentioned were, but from the former of the two primitive senses, whereby

the word is applied to the Chriſtian commonwealth. Then it means, as is pretended, either the church collective, that is, the whole community of Chriſtians, or the church repreſentative, that is, ſay ſome, the whole clerical orders, ſay others, the church judicatories, eſpecially the ſupreme. And this, I acknowledge, is a diſtinction that is favoured not only by thoſe of the Romiſh communion, but by moſt ſects of Proteſtants alſo. To many, however, and I acknowledge myſelf one of the number, it is manifeſt, that it is no leſs a novelty than the former, having no foundation in the ſcriptural uſage.

'The Hebrew word קהל exactly correſponds to the Greek εκκλησια, and is commonly rendered by it in the ſeptuagint, the only Greek tranſlation of the Old Teſtament in uſe in the days of our Saviour. Its idiom and phraſeology was conſequently become the ſtandard, in all matters that concerned religion, to all the Jewiſh writers who uſed the Greek language, and were commonly diſtinguiſhed by the name of Helleniſts. From them the term was originally borrowed by the penmen of the New Teſtament. From their manner of uſing it, therefore, the general meanings of the word are to be ſought. But though the phraſes כל קהל ישראל in Hebrew, and πασα ἡ εκκλησια Ισραελ in Greek, the whole church of Iſrael, do frequently occur in the Old Teſtament, there is not a ſingle paſſage in which they are not confeſſedly equivalent to the phraſes נוי

ישראל כל and παν το εθνος Ισραηλ, all the nation of Iſrael. The ſame may be ſaid of the phraſes להל אלחים and עם אלחים, ἡ εκκλησια θεȣ and ὁ λαος θεȣ, the church of God and the people of God. A diſtinction between theſe would have been pronounced by them inconceivable, as being a diſtinction between the church and its conſtituent members. In the Latin tranſlation called the Vulgate, the date of which, or a great part of which, if I miſtake not, is about the beginning of the fifth century, the Greek word is commonly retained, having been long before naturalized among Chriſtians. Accordingly they rendered thoſe phraſes in the Old Teſtament, *omnis eccleſia Iſrael* and *eccleſia Dei.*

'I know not for what reaſon our Engliſh tranſlators have never admitted the word *church* into their verſion of the Old Teſtament, notwithſtanding the frequent uſe they have made of it in their tranſlation of the New. They have always rendered the Hebrew word above mentioned by the Engliſh words, congregation, aſſembly, or ſome ſynonymous term. I do not mean to ſay, that in ſo doing they have miſ-tranſlated the word. Either of theſe Engliſh names is, perhaps, as well adapted to expreſs the ſenſe of the Hebrew, as the appellatives of one language commonly are to convey the ideas ſuggeſted by thoſe of another. But theſe Engliſh words were altogether as fit for expreſſing the ſenſe of the word εκκλησια in the New Teſtament, as of the word קהל in the

Old; the former being the term by which the latter had been rendered almoſt uniformly in the ſeptuagint, and which had been employed as equivalent by all the Helleniſt Jews. What I blame, therefore, in our tranſlators, is the want of uniformity. They ought conſtantly to have rendered the original expreſſion, either *church* in the Old Teſtament, or *congregation* in the New. Terms ſo perfectly coincident in ſignification, as thoſe Hebrew and Greek names are, ought to have been tranſlated by the ſame Engliſh word. There is one advantage at leaſt reſulting from ſuch an attention to uniformity, which is this, that if the application of the word ſhould, in a few paſſages, be dubious, a compariſon with the other paſſages wherein it occurs, often ſerves entirely to remove the doubt. They are the more inexcuſeable in regard to the preſent inſtance, that they do not refuſe the title of church to the Iſraelitiſh commonwealth, when an occaſion of giving it occurs in the New Teſtament, though they would take no occaſion in the Old. Thus they have rendered the words of Stephen, who ſays, ſpeaking of Moſes, Acts vii. 38. "This is he that was in the church in the wilderneſs." Ουτος εστιν ὁ γενομενος εν τη εκκλησια εν τη ερημω.

'But in the uſe neither of the Greek word in the New Teſtament, nor of the correſpondent Hebrew word in the Old, do we find a veſtige of an application of the term to a ſmaller part of the community, their governors, paſtors, or prieſts, for

inſtance, as repreſenting the whole. The only paſſage, as far as I can learn, that has been, with any appearance of plauſibility, alleged for this purpoſe, is Matt. xviii. 17. where our Lord, in the directions he gives for removing offences between brethren, enjoins the party offended, after repeated admonitions in a more private manner have proved ineffectual, to relate the whole to the church, ειπε τη εκκλησια; and it is added, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." Now I aſk, by what rule of ſound criticiſm can we arbitrarily impoſe here on the word *church*, the ſignification of church repreſentative, a ſignification which we do not find it bears in one other paſſage of Scripture? To affirm, without proof, that this is the ſenſe of it here, is taking for granted the very point in queſtion.

'But we have more than merely negative evidence that the meaning of the word is here, as in other places, no more than congregation, and that the term ought to have been rendered ſo. Let it be obſerved, that our Lord gave theſe directions during the ſubſiſtence of the Moſaic eſtabliſhment; and if we believe that he ſpoke intelligibly, or with a view to be underſtood, we muſt believe alſo, that he uſed the word in an acceptation with which the hearers were acquainted. Dodwell himſelf ſaw the propriety of this rule of interpreting, when he ſaid, * 'It very much con-

'* Diſtinction between Soul and Spirit, &c. § 7.

firms me in my reaſonings, when I find an interpretation of the Scriptures not only agreeable to the words of the Scriptures, but agreeable alſo to the notions and ſignifications of words then received. For that ſenſe which was moſt likely to be then underſtood was, in all likelihood, the true ſenſe intended by the Holy Ghoſt himſelf. Otherwiſe there could be no ſecurity that his true ſenſe could be conveyed to future ages, if they had been themſelves miſtaken in it, to whoſe underſtanding the Holy Ghoſt was then particularly concerned to accommodate himſelf.' Now all the then known acceptations, as I ſhewed before, of the name εκκλησια, were theſe two, the whole Jewiſh people, and a particular congregation. The ſcope of the place ſufficiently ſhews it could not be the former of theſe ſenſes, it muſt therefore be the latter. What further confirms this interpretation is, that the Jews were accuſtomed to call thoſe aſſemblies which met together for worſhip in the ſame ſynagogue by this appellation, and had, if we may believe ſome learned men converſant in Jewiſh antiquities, a rule of procedure ſimilar to that here recommended, which our Lord adopted from the ſynagogue, and tranſplanted into his church.

'Another collateral and corroborative evidence, that by εκκλησια is here meant not a repreſentative body, but the whole of a particular congregation, is the actual uſage of the church for the firſt three hundred years. I had occaſion for-

merly to remark, that as far down as Cyprian's time, which was the middle of the third century, when the power of the people was in the decline, it continued to be the practice, that nothing in matters of scandal and censure could be concluded without the consent and approval of the congregation. And this, as it appears to have been pretty uniform, and to have subsisted from the beginning, is, in my opinion, the best commentary which we, at this distance, can obtain on the passage.

'If any impartial hearer is not satisfied on this point, I would recommend it to him, without the aid of any commentator on either side of the question, but with the help of proper concordances, attentively to search the Scriptures. Let him examine every passage in the New Testament wherein the word we render church is to be found; let him canvass in the writings of the Old Testament every sentence wherein the correspondent word occurs; let him add to these the apocryphal books received by the Romanists, which, as they were either originally written, or translated by Hellenists, amongst whom the term εκκλησια was in frequent use, must be of some authority in ascertaining the Jewish acceptation of the word; and if he find a single passage wherein it clearly means either the priesthood, or the rulers of the nation, or any thing that can be called a church representative, let him fairly admit the distinction as scriptural and proper. Otherwise he cannot

admit it, in a consistency with any just rule of interpretation.

'I observed, in a preceding lecture, that the term ἐκκλησία is, in some passages, applied to the people, exclusively of the pastors. The same was remarked of the word κλῆροι, (not as though these terms did not properly comprehend both, but because, in collectives, the name of a whole is often given to a great majority) but I have not discovered one passage wherein either ἐκκλησία or κλῆρος, is applied to the pastors exclusively of the people. The notion, therefore, of a church representative, how commonly soever it has been received, is a mere usurper of later date. And it has fared here as it sometimes does in cases of usurpation, the original proprietor comes, though gradually, to be at length totally dispossessed. Should any man now talk of the powers of the church, and of the rights of churchmen, would the hearers apprehend, that he meant the powers of a Christian congregation, or the rights of all who are members of the Christian community? And if they should come to learn that this is his meaning, would they not be apt to say, 'It is pity that this man, before he attempts to speak on these subjects, does not learn to speak intelligibly, by conforming to the current use of the language?' It is therefore not without reason that I affirm, that the more modern acceptation, though an intruder, has jostled out the rightful and primitive one almost entirely. But as every man,

who would be underſtood, is under a neceſſity of employing words according to the general uſe of the time preſent,

Quem penes arbitrium eſt, et jus, et norma loquendi;

when I employ, for the future, any of the words affected by this remark, I am always, unleſs when the connection indicates the contrary, to be underſtood as uſing them in the ſenſe in which they are now commonly received. Only by the deduction that has been given of the origin of the change, we may perceive, that from what is ſaid in relation to the church in Scripture, nothing can juſtly be concluded in ſupport of church authority, or the privileges of church-men, in the ſenſe which theſe terms generally have at preſent *.'

The Roman Catholics maintain, that by *the church* is meant the Pope †, and conſider the

* Campbell's Lectures on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, vol. i. p 319, —328.

† 'Thoſe paſſages wherein Chriſt ſeems to give authority to the church, as that wherein he ſays, that it is the *pillar and baſis of the truth*, and that other, Let him who *will not hear the church be to thee as a heathen and a publican*, are all to be underſtood of its head, which is the Pope.' See the ſpeech of Father Lainez at the Council of Trent, *apud* Campbell Eccl. Hiſt. vol. ii. p. 169.

'With regard to *the church*, he (Wickliff) was not fond of applying the words *church* and *churchmen* merely to the clergy. As theſe were often men of bad lives, he thought ſuch application a vile proſtitution of theſe ſacred names. Beſides, it had bad influence, he thought, upon the laity, ſeeming to exclude them from the pale of Chriſt's church, and to give them a diſpo-

precept, "If he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican," to imply the ſubmiſſion which is to be paid to his authority, on pain of excommunication.

While the importance of the office of an elder is much inſiſted upon in Scripture, there is not the ſmalleſt countenance given to any authority over the people, ſimilar to that which the clergy, as they are called, have uſurped. The elders are, as we ſhall ſee, to put the laws of Chriſt in execution, but only with conſent, and in preſence of the church.

The principal objection againſt the word *church* always denoting, in the New Teſtament, a ſingle congregation, is drawn from the account in Scripture of the church at Jeruſalem. Three thouſand perſons were converted on the day of Pentecoſt, and ſoon after many more, Acts ii. 41. 47. iv. 4. v. 14. How could ſuch numbers meet in one congregation?

We are but imperfectly acquainted with the ſtate of things at Jeruſalem. The temple-worſhip was completely different from any thing among us. Vaſt crowds of Jews came up to the great feaſts from every part of Judea and the adjacent countries. We have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that the

ſition for licentious practice. If they were not of Chriſt's *church*, they were not under Chriſt's laws. He would never, therefore, have any idea fixed to the word *church*, but that of the whole body of Chriſtians.'—Gilpin's Life of Wickliff, page 59. Lond. 1766.

thouſands who believed were all fixed inhabitants of Jeruſalem. Although, doubtleſs, thoſe who were converted would incline to continue with the apoſtles, yet we cannot ſuppoſe that they could with propriety remain there, while their families and occupations demanded their preſence at their own abodes. They would return, and tell what great things God had done for them, and thus the foundation of new churches would be laid. Arguments ariſing from ſuppoſed difficulties, are always to be received with caution, for there may be circumſtances, in affairs ſo remote, of which we are ignorant, which, if known, would make all plain.

We learn from Joſephus, that the multitude who aſſembled in the temple was immenſe. He ſays, (Jewiſh War, Book vi. chap. 9.) that Ceſtius, under Nero, directed the high prieſts to take the number of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem at the time of the paſſover. They found the ſacrifices to be 256,500, which, allowing ten perſons to each victim (the ordinary number), amounts to 2,565,000 perſons, pure according to the rites of the law, deducting thoſe who by uncleanneſſes could not partake at this feaſt. He elſewhere eſtimates the number of thoſe who aſſembled at the feaſt of the paſſover at 3,000,000 *, a number to which the uſual reſident inhabitants bore no proportion. The diſciples at Jeruſalem continued to join in the temple-worſhip, Acts iii. 1.

* Book ii. chap. 14.

and of courſe might have been eſteemed a new ſect of Jews. We know * that heathen writers, as Suetonius and Tacitus, thought them ſuch. This may have been the caſe, and where an objection is brought from an alleged impoſſibility, it is ſufficient to ſhew how the accounts may be reconciled. There are difficulties in reconciling the various accounts of our Lord's appearances after his reſurrection; but every Chriſtian believes they perfectly harmonize, although, from the conciſeneſs of the narrative, he may not be able to point out the preciſe order of events. In anſwering the cavils of infidels on this ſubject, it has been thought ſufficient to ſhew how the various accounts may be made to agree, without affirming that an exact account is given of the matter †.

If, then, from the ſtate of the Jewiſh worſhip, the Chriſtians may probably have all met together in the temple, this ought to be deemed a ſufficient anſwer to an argument founded entirely on the ſuppoſed difficulty of the caſe. Beſides, it is ſurely very improper to allege any difficulties whatever, in oppoſition to expreſs divine teſtimony. We have not a hint in Scripture, of the church of Jeruſalem being divided into ſeparate congregations. It is, on the contrary, uniformly ſpoken of as one congregation, in the following words of the Holy Ghoſt. "The ſame day were

* Claudius, cap. 25. Annal. lib. xv. cap. 44.

† See Scott's Anſwer to Paine.

added unto them above three thouſand ſouls. And they continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts ii. 41, 42. "And all that believed were together," ver. 44. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple," ver. 46. "And the Lord added to the church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved," ver. 47. "And when they had prayed, the place was ſhaken where they were aſſembled together. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul," Acts iv. 31, 32. "And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch *. And of the reſt durſt no man join himſelf to them; but the people magnified them," Acts v. 12, 13. "And in thoſe days, when the number of the diſciples was multiplied, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews. Then the twelve called the multitude of the diſciples unto them, and ſaid, It is not meet that we ſhould leave the word of God, and ſerve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you ſeven men of honeſt report, whom we may appoint over this buſineſs.

* We are here expreſsly informed, that they all aſſembled in Solomon's porch. To this it has been objected, that the place was not ſufficiently large to hold ſo many, as is evident from the dimenſions of the porch built by him, 2 Chron. iii. 4. But it no where appears that this porch was the ſame place which went by the name of Solomon in our Lord's time. We are ſure that this place was capable of containing a great multitude. Under a ſermon preached there, at leaſt two thouſand were converted, Acts iii. 11. iv. 4.

And the ſaying pleaſed the whole multitude: and they choſe Stephen, &c. whom they ſet before the apoſtles," Acts vi. 1, 2, 3. 5, 6. "The day following, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were preſent. And they ſaid unto him, The multitude muſt needs come together; for they will hear that thou art come," Acts xxi. 18. 22. "And when they were come to Jeruſalem, they were received of the church, and of the apoſtles and elders. But there roſe up certain of the ſect of the Phariſees which believed, ſaying—And the apoſtles and elders came together for to conſider of this matter. Then all the multitude kept ſilence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul. And after they had held their peace, James anſwered, ſaying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Then it pleaſed the apoſtles and elders, with the whole church, to ſend choſen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas," Acts xv. 4, 5, 6. 12, 13. 22. Let any one judge what is the plain and obvious import of theſe paſſages. Do they not all expreſs or imply, that the believers at Jeruſalem were one undivided body, aſſembling in one place for the worſhip of God? By whatever rule of interpretation this is denied, the moſt important facts and doctrines of the goſpel may be ſet aſide.

From the view we have taken of the conſtitution of the apoſtolic churches, it appears, that although embarked in the ſame cauſe, they muſt have been completely independent of each other.

Jeſus has not even permitted an individual to transfer to a church the ſubjection which is only due to himſelf. Far leſs can we ſuppoſe, that he has given one church, or churches, dominion over others. If the diſtinction ſtated between the objects of a church, and thoſe of any civil aſſociation be attended to, it will be evident that ſuch an order of things would greatly retard, inſtead of promoting the end which Chriſt had in view in appointing churches. This is incompatible with the exerciſe of human authority or coercion. Here is an internal argument which is ſufficient to ſettle the diſpute.

But can any thing be found in Scripture to countenance the idea of the dependence of congregations of ſaints upon one another? In vain do we look for it. Paul did not order the churches of Achaia to correct the abuſes of the church of Corinth, although it was ſituated in that region. He wrote to the church itſelf, which is expreſsly ſaid to have been a congregation of ſaints coming together into *one* place to obſerve the ordinances of Chriſt, 1 Cor. xi. 20. If regard to the authority of Chriſt did not lead them to correct abuſes, they were incorrigible. No other authority could be of any avail. It would then have been evident that they had departed from the faith, and the only means of recovering them would have been to have again preached the goſpel to them as unbelievers.

But in conſequence of the alliance of what has

been called the church and the ſtate, and the maxims of the latter being applied to the former, Chriſtians have connected the idea of diſorder with the want of compulſory power, and have ſought for ſome warrant in Scripture for the eſtabliſhment of ſpiritual courts; that is, courts exactly reſembling civil judicatories, to decide on the concerns of a ſpiritual kingdom, and to enforce obedience to their decrees by authority. On the foundation of the account given us, Acts xv. of a meeting of the church of Jeruſalem, with the apoſtles and elders, a paſſage wholly inapplicable to the purpoſe, has been built the theory of ſynods and councils, compoſed of the repreſentatives of various churches, to ſettle the order of the churches within their bounds *.

According to Preſbyterians, this was an aſſembly, or, in their language, a ſynod compoſed of the repreſentatives of different churches. Nay, they point out to us ſome of the members. The late worthy Mr Brown of Haddington thus paraphraſes Paul's words: "But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumciſed," Gal. ii. 3. 'But to manifeſt how ſtedfaſtly I adhered to my principles relative to the freedom of the goſpel ſtate, and how far I was from giving the leaſt countenance to the ſuppoſed neceſſity of obſerving the law of Moſes as

* See this ſubject fully conſidered in Reaſons of Separation from the Eſtabliſhed Church, by Mr Innes, and in an Expoſition of Acts xv. by Mr Ewing.

a condition of juſtification before God, Titus, who was a Gentile, was admitted as a miniſter of Chriſt, and a member of the ſynod, without being circumciſed.'

If we attend to the account given of the meeting at Jeruſalem, it ſeems a very ſimple narrative, penned for an obvious and important purpoſe, and giving no ſanction either to ſynod or council. We learn from Acts xiii. xiv. that Paul and Barnabas being called by the Holy Ghoſt to go upon a miſſion, were recommended to the grace of God by the church at Antioch, by prayer, faſting, and laying on of hands. Having fulfilled the work, they returned; and having aſſembled the church, they rehearſed all which God had done with them, and eſpecially how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Soon after this, certain Jews came from Jeruſalem, who informed the Gentile Chriſtians at Antioch, that except they were circumciſed, and kept the law of Moſes, they could not be ſaved. Paul and Barnabas, who had been employed and qualified to declare to the Gentiles the whole counſel of God, had no ſmall diſſenſion and diſputation with them, but ſtill they maintained their error. What was to be done? If the Jewiſh teachers were right, the Gentile converts at Antioch were yet in their ſins. It was agreed on all hands, that the word of the Lord had ſounded out from Jeruſalem. The apoſtles were ſtill there, who were the choſen witneſſes of the death and re-

ſurrection of Chriſt, Acts x. 41. to whom, in a particular manner, the promiſe of the Spirit was given to guide them into all the truth, John xvi. 13.; to whom, then, could they ſo properly apply?

It is true, Paul was not inferior to the chief of the apoſtles, although he had not been called to attend our Lord while he was upon earth. He had learned the goſpel, and the whole will and counſel of God, by the immediate revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, but he was the apoſtle of the Gentiles, and but little known to the brethren in Judea. He was looked upon with a jealous eye by many of his countrymen, who were not diſpoſed to acquieſce in his deciſion. He had already delivered his ſentiments, and it was of much importance that it ſhould be fully proved that he and the other apoſtles were guided by the ſame Spirit, Gal. ii. 6, 7, 8. eſpecially as circumciſion was practiſed by Chriſtians at Jeruſalem. Accordingly the church at Antioch determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other brethren, ſhould go up to Jeruſalem, that the diſpute might be decided.

On their arrival, they were received of the church, and of the apoſtles and elders. Theſe came together to conſider the queſtion of the neceſſity of circumciſion to ſalvation. After much diſputing *, (ſimilar to what had formerly

* This diſputing could not be amongſt the apoſtles, who, in ordering the affairs of the church, were under the infallible di-

taken place at Antioch) between Paul and Barnabas and the Jewiſh brethren, Peter and James delivered their opinion. This was adopted unanimouſly, ver. 22. and letters were written in the name of the apoſtles, the elders, and the whole church, declaring, not merely the opinion of a church that the Gentiles ſhould not be circumciſed, but the decree and determination of the Holy Ghoſt *. Thus was the queſtion finally ſettled, and the ſentence inſerted as a part of that Scripture which cannot be broken. Circumciſion was a ſolemn ordinance of God, and it was therefore proper that it, as well as the law of Moſes, ſhould thus publicly be declared to be no longer neceſſary for the acceptable worſhippers of Jehovah. Had there not been a revelation from God on this ſubject, it is more than probable that difference of practice, as to circumciſion, might have

rection of the Holy Ghoſt, and never differed in their doctrine; and yet it has been alleged to be ſimilar to the debates which take place in church courts

* The expreſſion, *it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt*, does not appear to refer to the Spirit as guiding the apoſtles, but to the teſtimony quoted by James from the word of God, concerning the Gentiles being received into the church. At every period Gentiles might be circumciſed and incorporated with Iſrael; but their being ſtill ſpoken of by the Holy Ghoſt as Gentiles, while the name of God was called upon them, implied that they were true worſhippers of God, and yet not incorporated into the Jewiſh church If we apply the expreſſion, however, to the Spirit by which the apoſtles were directed, it will follow, that no ſynod of uninſpired men can claim this as a precedent for their decrees being received.

continued among Chriſtians to this day; but, by this deciſion, the Jews were gradually prepared for laying it aſide.

It is evident, then, that this meeting bears no reſemblance to a modern ſynod, compoſed of repreſentatives from different pariſhes or congregations, aſſembling for the purpoſe of hearing appeals on caſes of diſcipline, as well as on other things, and by their authority ſettling any points of difference which may have ariſen in theſe. Paul and others were there from Antioch, not as judges, but to obtain the deciſion of the apoſtles. Indeed this council, as ſome call it, would rather authorize appeals to a particular church, an argument which has not eſcaped the church of Rome *,

* Eckius, the famous adverſary of Luther, uſed the very ſame weapons againſt that Reformer, which Preſbyterians employ againſt congregational government. 'The apoſtles and elders convened,' ſays he. 'The Gentiles did not oppoſe themſelves to the apoſtles, in like manner as Luther to the councils, ſaying, 'By what authority—By what Scripture do ye this? Why do ye deprive us of the liberty conferred on us by Chriſt?' For although during the deliberation (i. e. this recorded in Acts xv.) they cited that paſſage in the 9th chapter of Amos, yet reſpecting the three things prohibited they brought in nothing, and alſo reſpecting the deciſion they adduced no paſſage of Scripture—At Antioch they received the things concluded on at Jeruſalem, but Luther rejects the things concluded on at Rome. It appears, then, at this time, that a council had power to determine that ſome things were neceſſary which were not ſimply neceſſary for faith. Why ſhould not the ſame power abide in the church, ſince neceſſity always requires it?'——See a very ſcarce and curious book, entitled, 'Enchiridion Locorum Communium adverſus Lutherum et alios Hoſtes Eccleſiae,' Paris, 1572. p. 13.—It

and thus gives a fairer ſanction to Popery than to Preſbytery.

It may appear ſtrange, that if a revelation was to be given reſpecting this matter, the whole church ſhould be joined in the decree of the apoſtles, or that they and their elders, as well as the apoſtles, ſhould be called together to conſult. But by this means a great end was gained. The church heard all that could be ſaid upon the ſubject, together with the deciſion of the choſen witneſſes and ambaſſadors of Chriſt, and thus, no doubt, would be diſpoſed the more readily to embrace uncircumciſed Gentiles as brethren in Chriſt.

The apoſtles well knew their ſuperiority over others in the church, and, on proper occaſions, boldly aſſerted it; but they avoided this without neceſſity. It was their delight not to command but to entreat, Phil. 8, 9.; and hence Peter, when addreſſing elders, prefers the title of elder, that he might not ſeem to aſſume ſuperiority, 1 Pet. v. 1. For the ſame reaſon they added in the decree, *the elders and the church*, juſt as Paul in his epiſtles frequently joins ſome of his brethren to himſelf; but no one ſuppoſes that this impeaches the authority of the epiſtle, or that it implies Timothy, Soſthenes, or the brethren who were with him, Gal. i. 2. to have been inſpired.

would be eaſy to quote from this book, on every part of the argument, reaſonings of perfectly ſimilar tendency with thoſe which are every day employed in defence of excluſive clerical authority in national churches.

Although much has been said on this passage of Scripture, as sanctioning appeals to synods, &c. few persons at present attempt to maintain it. Indeed the independency of the first churches is generally admitted by the most candid and able commentators, and by the writers of ecclesiastical history. 'The churches in those early times,' says Mosheim, 'were entirely independent, none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws. For though the churches founded by the apostles had this particular deference shewn them, that they were consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no juridical authority, no sort of supremacy over the others, nor the least right to enact laws for them. Nothing, on the contrary, is more evident, than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there ever appear in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *councils* and *metropolitans* derive their origin. It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces.——The meeting of the church of Jerusalem mentioned in the xvth chapter of the Acts, is commonly considered as the first *Christian council.* But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council.* That meeting was only of one church, and if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow that

there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows, that a *council* is an aſſembly of deputies or commiſſioners ſent from ſeveral churches aſſociated by certain bonds in a general body, and therefore the ſuppoſition above mentioned falls to the ground*.

If we cannot find the divine right of claſſical preſbytery, ſynods, &c. in Acts xv. in vain ſhall we look for it elſewhere in the word of God. The common defence of this ſyſtem in theſe days is, that we are not bound to follow the example of the apoſtolic churches, but are left, in a great meaſure, to our own diſcretion in theſe matters. The late Dr Hardy, a miniſter of the church of Scotland, and Profeſſor of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory in the Univerſity of Edinburgh, an authoriſed inſtructor of thoſe training for the miniſtry, ſcrupled not publicly, in his lectures, to treat with ridicule the idea of the order of *that* church being preſcribed in Scripture†.

Some have been apprehenſive that the independency of the churches muſt prevent their union

* Moſheim's Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, cent. I. part. ii. chap. 2. See alſo on this ſubject, the quotations from Moſheim, 'De Rebus Chriſtianorum ante Conſtantinum,' at the end of Mr Ewing's Expoſition before referred to.

† He was in the uſe of telling his ſtudents, that ſynod ſermons uſed formerly to be divided into four heads, proving the divine right, 1. of kirk ſeſſions—2. of preſbyteries—3. of ſynods—4. of general aſſemblies.—What a pity, ſaid he, that the preachers ſhould have forgot to prove the divine right of the committees of overtures and bills!!

and co-operation. Union of churches is highly important, and must take place in as far as religion prospers among them. If they are guided by the word of God, they will have the same end in view, and consequently must be united. But in order to union in religion being beneficial, it must be voluntary. As love is the perfect and only bond by which the members of a church are connected, this is sufficient for uniting different churches. Love alone can produce useful co-operation amongst them. Considering the relation in which they stand to each other, it is highly important that by mutual good offices they should cultivate brotherly love. This may be done by their giving and receiving advice; by their praying for each other, especially when any thing difficult or important occurs; by their joining to promote the spread of the gospel; by their sending messengers to each other, as we find the apostolic churches did, 2 Cor. viii. 23.; by their communicating to each others necessities, and by many things similar. Such correspondence is calculated to have the happiest effects, while it allows the most perfect liberty and independence to each church.

Stimulated by mutual love, the first churches co-operated in relieving the poor saints at Jerusalem, and the same principle will lead the churches of Christ to co-operate in whatever tends to promote the Redeemer's will and glory. The influence of human authority, whether vested in a

Pope, a Patriarch, a bench of Biſhops, or a General Aſſembly of clergymen, is but a poor ſubſtitute for this. Even voluntary aſſociations to regulate the order of churches in a certain diſtrict are unſcriptural. One church may adviſe another as well as an individual may adviſe an individual, but any attempt to influence by authority the order of any church, is a departure from Scripture, and never can be attended with good effects.

It may be alleged, that if a church has not ſome body of men to controul it, they will be apt to act improperly and partially. All men are liable to err, and every church needs the conſtant care of the great Shepherd. But this care he ever exerciſes. He has promiſed to be in the midſt of them when met in his name. If we view a church merely like other ſocieties, they may be conſidered to be equally prone to err, and we may imagine it might be an advantage to have unprejudiced perſons to appeal to; but as God promiſed to Iſrael of old a ſpecial ſuperintendance, ſo has Jeſus to his churches. It was never intended that they ſhould go on without it, and this is calculated to keep up a ſpirit of dependence on himſelf, without which no church can proſper.—We have thus traced from Scripture the conſtitution of the apoſtolic churches. This is ſo plainly delineated in the word of God, that many of the beſt informed men in churches of an oppoſite deſcription condemn their own practice, by

freely admitting the view which has been here given.

We may learn, from what has been ſaid, the nature of a true church of Chriſt, reſpecting which there have been many diſputes. It is a ſociety formed for the ſame purpoſe as the churches planted by the apoſtles, and whoſe conſtitution is the ſame with theirs. Deviation from theſe renders a ſociety unworthy of the name. The goſpel may be preached, and ſome other ordinances adminiſtered, as baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, and ſtill a religious aſſembly where this takes place, and in which there may be many Chriſtians, may not be a church of Chriſt.

Fellowſhip-meetings, which have long exiſted in this country, more nearly reſemble churches of Chriſt than many great bodies which have aſſumed the name. Theſe are voluntary aſſociations for mutual edification. They are compoſed only of ſuch as appear to one another to be ſaints. A certain diſcipline is maintained in them, and they only need to obſerve other ordinances to render them complete. It is worthy of obſervation, that the members of many ſuch meetings would on no account admit to this private fellowſhip the great body of thoſe whom they avouch to be brethren, by joining with them in ſhewing forth the Lord's death.

We may here obſerve how much the Lord has countenanced what came neareſt his own ordinance. Perhaps the edification of Chriſtians has

been more promoted by these meetings, than by any other means which those connected with them have enjoyed; and the comfort which believers have there enjoyed, in fellowship together, has prepared the minds of many for coming out of unscriptural churches. It is not to be wondered at, that from the beginning they have been regarded by these churches with a jealous eye. This was the case even in an early and a comparatively pure period of the church of Scotland. 'During their want of faithful ministers, many serious people,' says Mr Brown, 'in Scotland and Ireland, had met together on Sabbaths and other occasions for prayer and spiritual conference. Some, before they were driven from Ireland, had been a little infected with *Brownism* from England, and had inclined to join the Independents in New-England. These brought along with them some of their singularities, which were overlooked on account of their remarkable piety, till an appearance thereof happened in the charge of Henry Guthry of Stirling, afterward worthless bishop of Dunkeld. The laird of Lecky, a man remarkable for knowledge and serious godliness, and who had been a distinguished sufferer under the late bishops, much encouraged fellowship-meetings for prayer and Christian conference. Several of his neighbours, who could not read themselves, or who thought his manner more edifying than their own, attended his family-worship. Some, who probably came as spies,

alleged, that in prayer he uſed ſome expreſſions not duly honourable to Guthry his miniſter. Guthry immediately proſecuted Lecky before his preſbytery, and got fellowſhip-meetings condemned as prejudicial to the ſtanding office of the miniſtry, and got the magiſtrates to extirpate them from the place. Not ſatisfied with this, he laboured to have them utterly aboliſhed from the nation; and by collecting and exaggerating reports of their imprudencies, he drew Mr Henderſon and Mr Calderwood, who had ſeen the Brownifical diſorders in Holland, and ſome other leading clergymen, to his ſide. In the Aſſembly 1638, he had attempted to foiſt in a complaint againſt theſe meetings. But Meſſrs J. Livingſton, S. Rutherfoord, and D. Dickſon, and others, unwilling that many ſerious ſaints ſhould be publicly diſcredited for the imprudence of a few, got the affair kept from any public hearing; and it was agreed that Guthry ſhould preach up the duty of family-worſhip, upon which he ſaid theſe meetings encroached, and that the eminently pious Meſſrs Blair, Livingſton, and M'Lellan, who befriended ſuch ſocieties, ſhould preach againſt night-meetings, and the abuſes complained of. Their ſoft and Chriſtian methods of correcting or preventing ſuch abuſes not pleaſing Guthry, who hated to ſee or hear of any others more ſerious than himſelf, he continued to exclaim againſt theſe meetings in general. To quench this flame of contention, Meſſrs Henderſon and Borthwick

upon the one ſide, and Dickſon and Blair upon the other, held a ſolemn conference on the point. Henderſon drew up a paper of regulations or caveats for ſuch meetings, bearing, That the members ſhould be few, and ſuch as were proper to meet together; that the meetings ſhould not interfere with public or family-worſhip, or relative duties, nor be held in the night; that they ſhould be occaſional, and no wiſe tending to ſeparate the members from the reſt of the congregation; that no impertinent queſtions, nor uncharitable judging of others ſhould be allowed in them; that if any members in them had any objection againſt the common form of public worſhip, (as *bowing* in the pulpit, and ſinging the *Gloria Patri*), they ſhould diſcreetly lay them before the perſons concerned; and finally, that all things relative to them ſhould be conducted with holineſs, prudence, humility, and charity. This gave general ſatisfaction. But Guthry and his aſſiſtants, pretending that caveats brought in biſhops, puſhed the matter into this northern aſſembly, in which they expected their friends to be ſtrongeſt. Guthry poured forth torrents of accuſation againſt the abſent Lecky, and the ſociety meetings. Simſon of Bathgate ſeconded him; and in the moſt outrageous manner upbraided Rutherfoord, Livingſton, and M'Lellan, as encouragers of them. Supported by the Earl of Seaforth, and many of the northern clergy, Guthry and his faction thought to have carried an

act for the utter suppression of them. But Dickson, Baillie, Rutherfoord, and others, so warmly opposed them, that they could only get it enacted, That people should observe family-worship with the members of the family alone; that reading of prayers is lawful, where none can pray extempore; that none but preachers shall explain Scripture; and that no innovation relative to the time, matter, or manner of religious worship, or the number or quality of joiners in it, be introduced without allowance from the Assembly *.'

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO COMPOSED THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

SECTION I.

It was impossible to consider the constitution of the apostolic churches, without, in some measure, anticipating our present subject. What was said in the former chapter, clearly

* History of the Church of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 181,—183. by the late Mr Brown of Haddington. Glasg. 1784.

ſhews of what kind of perſons the apoſtolic churches were compoſed. If the intention of Jeſus in appointing that churches ſhould be collected, was to ſeparate between his own people and the reſt of the world, it follows, that the members ought to be ſuch as are his diſciples. The manner in which they are to be governed, proves this with equal certainty. This is the worſt poſſible for any ſociety who are not his diſciples. It leaves room for whiſpering, ſwellings, tumults, and diviſions, and does not commit ſufficient power to any individual, or to the church, to ſuppreſs theſe in perſons who are not under the influence of the authority of Chriſt. It is well adapted, and ſufficiently ſtrong to curb the remaining corruption of real Chriſtians; but never being intended for worldly men, the only direction a church has reſpecting ſuch, or thoſe who in their manners reſemble them, and will not liſten to admonition, is to put them away.

We formerly quoted the viſion contained in the laſt chapters of Ezekiel's prophecies, and obſerved, that although we do not fully underſtand it, this muſt refer to the times of the goſpel. While there is a conſtant alluſion to the temple-worſhip, there are many things entirely different from, nay oppoſite to this. Of this deſcription is the following: "And thou ſhalt ſay to the rebellious, even to the houſe of Iſrael, Thus ſaith the Lord, O ye houſe of Iſrael, let it ſuffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought into my ſanc-

tuary ſtrangers uncircumciſed in heart, and uncircumciſed in fleſh, to be in my ſanctuary to pollute it, even my houſe, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, becauſe of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things; but ye have ſet keepers of my charge in my ſanctuary for yourſelves. Thus ſaith the Lord God, No ſtranger uncircumciſed in heart, nor uncircumciſed in fleſh, ſhall enter into my ſanctuary, of any ſtranger that is among the children of Iſrael," Ezek. xliv. 6, 7, 8, 9. On this paſſage Mr Scott moſt juſtly obſerves, 'The introduction of ſtrangers that had not been circumciſed, to eat of the peace-offerings and oblations, or even to eat the fat and the blood, of which none ought to have eaten, would have been a groſs violation of the Moſaic law. But the uncircumciſed *in heart*, as well as in fleſh, are here mentioned; and there was no law to exclude unregenerate perſons, who were circumciſed, and ritually clean, from the ordinances of the temple: ſo that this muſt denote a different conſtitution; and it ſeems to refer to the proſtitution of the Chriſtian ſacraments, by admitting ungodly perſons to them, who come from ſecular motives, or in hypocriſy, to partake of them; and to the admiſſion of ſuch perſons into the miniſtry, as ſeek nothing but the emolument; which things are the ſcandal, and threaten the ruin of the Proteſtant churches, as well as others. Thus God's covenant is broken, and its

ſeals, and the moſt ſacred inſtitutions of Chriſtianity, are proſtituted, ſecularized, and abuſed; the charge of the moſt holy things is neglected, and keepers are placed over the charge of God in the ſanctuary, to pleaſe the humours, to flatter the pride, or to ſubſerve the luſts of men. Such abuſes will be terminated when this prophecy ſhall be fulfilled.' In his practical obſervations on the ſame paſſage, he ſays, 'Then the glory of the Lord filleth his ſanctuary, and his people adore him with humble gratitude; and we ſhould carefully meditate on theſe goings of our God and King, and hearken to all that he ſays to us concerning the ordinances and laws of his houſe; and we ſhould mark well the entrance into his courts, and all the goings out of them. Thus we ſhall be able to ſee how rebelliouſly even profeſſed Chriſtians have proſtituted his ſacraments and the ſacred miniſtry, by throwing them open to ſtrangers, enemies, and evidently unregenerate perſons, to the diſgrace of the goſpel, the grief of true believers, the diſhonour of God, and the encouragement of wicked men. Alas, they to whom theſe charges have been committed, have not kept them, but have profaned them for ſecular intereſt or carnal affection, to feed hungry relatives, or to enrich or humour ungodly connections. Or men have heaped to themſelves flattering teachers after their own luſts; or they have made the ſeals of God's covenant the paſſport to preferment. Theſe are groſs violations of the cove-

nant, and great abominations, of which it ſhould ſuffice all the parties concerned. They have always been the ruin of vital godlineſs, in proportion as they have prevailed, and, alas, they prevail almoſt univerſally.'

Theſe remarks are moſt juſt and appoſite. The old covenant was written on tables of ſtone, but God promiſed a new covenant, to be written on the fleſhly tables of the hearts of his people; and thoſe alone are to be acknowledged as members of his churches, who ſhew by their fruits that ſuch is their character.

That the churches planted by the apoſtles were compoſed of ſuch as they deemed real believers, will appear by conſulting the addreſſes of the different epiſtles. "Paul, to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called ſaints: To the church of God at Corinth, to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called ſaints: To the ſaints which are at Epheſus, and the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus: To the ſaints in Chriſt Jeſus which are at Philippi: Peter, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." &c. &c.

No doubt falſe brethren unawares crept in among them, Gal. ii. 4. It was not neceſſary that the apoſtles ſhould be infallible in judging of characters; they might be miſtaken. Impreſſions which appeared to be made by the Spirit of God might wear off. We have Paul's explicit teſtimony concerning the church of Philippi. It was compoſed of ſuch in whom the apoſtle was

bound to believe that God had begun a good work; and he declares it to be meet for him to think this of *them all*, chap. i. 7.

The ſame is manifeſt by the whole tenor of all the other epiſtles. To adduce all the proofs of this which might be brought, would be to tranſcribe the whole of them. Every alluſion to the manner in which they were collected; every deſcription of the character of the members; every exhortation; every rebuke and warning given them, could only, with propriety, be addreſſed to believers. They had put off the old man with his deeds, Col. iii. 9. were all the children of light and the day, 1 Theſſ. v. 5. were temples of the Holy Ghoſt, 1 Cor. vi. 19. They were to purge out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump unleavened, 1 Cor. v. 7. to beware leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpring up to trouble them, and thereby many be defiled *. The Lord condemns one church for having ſome among them that held the doctrine of Balaam, and commends another which could not bear them who were evil, Rev. ii.

In the epiſtle to the Corinthians we have a very ſtrong teſtimony for the neceſſity of purity of communion. The apoſtle, 1 Cor. iii. 9,—17. compares the church of Corinth to a building of which he had laid the foundation; and proceeds to warn thoſe who might ſucceed him, how they carried up the building, from the conſideration of

* Compare Heb. xii. 15, 16, 17. with Deut. xxix. 18.

the conſequences to themſelves. Members might be added to the church who were *ſaved* *, and who gave evidence of this: theſe he repreſents under the emblem of gold, ſilver, precious ſtones; or men deſtitute of the truth might be received, whom he compares to wood, hay, ſtubble†. Although the difference might not immediately appear, yet he warns them that the great day would diſcover how they had acted: "If any man's work abide which he ſhall build thereon, he ſhall receive a reward. If any man's work ſhall be burned, he ſhall ſuffer loſs, yet he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire," ver. 13, 14. Real believers would be the crown of joy and rejoicing to him by whom they were added to the church; but others would not ſtand the fiery trial, and therefore, although the builder of ſuch, who was himſelf a Chriſtian, might be ſaved, yet his work ſhould be burned, and his joy impaired.

Having thus warned thoſe who might ſucceed him, of the loſs they ſhould ſuffer by adding to the church improper members through inatten-

* Ἰας σωζωμενους, the ſaved. Compare Acts ii. 47. with 1 Cor i. 18.; the words are the ſame in both places, but are properly rendered only in the latter place.

† If any one will examine the different emblems here uſed by the apoſtle, it will appear that the ſame are often uſed in the Old Teſtament, to diſtinguiſh the righteous and the wicked. See Lam. iv. 2. Job xxiii. 10. Pſal. lxvi. 10. Iſa. liv. 11. 13. Mal. iii. 17. Alſo, Jer. v. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 20. James i. 11. Mat. iv. 1. See Macknight's note on 1 Cor. iii. 12. alſo an illuſtration of this paſſage in the Miſſionary Magazine, vol. vii. pp. 225. 494.

tion, he denounces an awful judgment againſt ſuch as ſhould wilfully admit worthleſs materials into the building. "If any man deſtroy (φθειρει) the temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy," (φθερει), ver. 17.

The defection of the churches of Galatia is aſcribed to improper members being retained in communion. "This perſuaſion cometh not of him that calleth you; a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," chap. v. 8, 9.; and the Corinthians are alſo warned, that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, and are ſolemnly commanded to purge out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump unleavened, 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. To purge out the old leaven is to put away the wicked perſon, ver. 13.

Some have alleged that notoriouſly wicked perſons alone are to be put away, ſuch as the man who lived in inceſt; but throughout the whole New Teſtament, we find but two characters held forth, the children of God, and the children of the wicked one. The latter, out of the evil treaſure of their heart, muſt bring forth evil things; and this leaven will not be the leſs apt to leaven the lump, that it does not break forth into groſs crimes which tend to ſhock common decency. Probably men deſtitute of real religion, yet outwardly decent, are the moſt dangerous perſons with whom Chriſtians can aſſociate.

We have a ſtriking declaration of the Holy Ghoſt, in the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, re-

ſpecting this. Some among them had ſaid there was no reſurrection, xv. 12. The apoſtle eſtabliſhes, by the very ſtrongeſt evidence, the reſurrection of Chriſt, and ſhews that a denial of the reſurrection was in fact ſubverting the goſpel. He obſerves, that nothing but this glorious proſpect could ſupport him under his afflictions, and that all he had ſuffered for the goſpel was of no avail, if the dead riſe not. He goes on, ver. 33. "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteouſneſs, and ſin not; for ſome have not the knowledge of God: *I ſpeak this to your ſhame.*" Here he condemns them for having among them ſuch as had not the knowledge of God, and aſſures them, that however plauſibly they might impoſe upon themſelves, ſuch perſons would injure and pervert thoſe who were otherwiſe minded. In ſhort, if we have not ſufficient proof that the apoſtolic churches conſiſted of thoſe, and thoſe alone, who gave evidence of converſion to God, we may deſpair of attaining certainty of any thing contained in the word of God.

Some have repreſented the term *ſaints* uſed in the epiſtles, as well as the deſcription of the churches there given, to relate only to their external privileges. Before good men employ ſuch arguments, they ſhould conſider where they will lead. In the ſame way every doctrine of the goſpel may be ſet aſide. Baptiſm with water will become regeneration: the work of the Spirit

on the heart will only refer to miraculous gifts, and thus every truth of God may be explained away. It is true, that the members of the churches being really saints, depended on the truth of the profession which they made. God alone can judge the heart, but they gave sufficient evidence of their being the disciples of Jesus to produce in the minds of the apostles love for the truth's sake.

Notwithstanding all that the Scripture says, some, however, endeavour to prove that the first churches were not composed of true believers only. It is granted that improper persons crept in unawares; but was ever any one allowed by the apostles to continue, who gave evidence of being destitute of the truth? It has been alleged, that the sins committed in these churches could not have been committed by real Christians, and that the abuses and iniquities among them were greater than at present prevail in national churches. Paul was afraid lest when he came to Corinth he should find in the church debates, strifes, envyings, wrath, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, and lest he should bewail many which had sinned already, and had not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness which they had committed, 2 Cor. xii. 21. But let the circumstances of th Corinthians be considered. They were just converted from idolatry. The same disposition to comply with the world, which leads too many Christians in this country to spend their

time in worldly company, to marry thoſe who are not believers, or to go with their friends to a place of worſhip where the goſpel is not preached, would have led them, in thoſe days, to the commiſſion of fornication, or to eat in an idol's temple. Theſe did not affect the good character of men at that period. Fornication was not even conſidered to be a crime*, and real Chriſtians, by the influence of temptation, might eaſily be drawn aſide to indulge in the revelling to which they had been ſo long accuſtomed, when for a moment they let the truth ſlip out of their minds. Hence the abuſes among them, however inexcuſeable, muſt not be judged of by the moral ſtate and opinions of this country. Independent of religion, we are leſs liable from our habits, and from regard to public decency, to fall into ſuch exceſſes. It has been properly obſerved concerning the Hindoos, 'that ſhould thoſe who have appeared to embrace the goſpel, or others who may hereafter come forward, prove to be real Chriſtians, they may, notwithſtanding, be leſs amiable characters than are commonly found amongſt us. Human character, as cognizable by men, is a

* Socrates, Plato, Demoſthenes, and Cicero, with many others, might be appealed to in proof of the promiſcuous commerce of the ſexes being thought innocent, both among Greeks and Romans. Cicero, in his oration for M. Cælius, ſays, 'When was this not done? When was it found fault with? When was it not allowed? Can the time be named when this practice, which is now lawful, was not accounted ſo?' See Dr Leland's Advantages and Neceſſity of Revelation, vol. ii. 4to. p. 151, 152, &c.

compound of various materials, and arises from a number of very different causes. The state of morals in a country will have an inconceivable influence in forming the exterior of its inhabitants. That which is reputable and advantageous, is certain to be pursued in a considerable degree, and not a little for these purposes. Christianity has wrought so much in this and in some other nations, that gross lying, theft, robbery, adultery, &c. are in a good degree shamed out of countenance. No man can preserve his reputation, while he openly indulges in these vices. It is not so, however, in Hindostan. Such practices are there so common, that no manner of disgrace attaches to them. This being the case, there is nothing in the state of society to restrain a Hindoo from gross immorality. If he be restrained, it is merely by Christian principle, and the connection he has with Christians; which may not be equal to the same things accompanied, as they are in Europeans, with other things. This seems to have been the case with the Corinthian Christians. Their city was vicious to a proverb, and they were a very unamiable people. They set up men as heads of parties, held communion at idolatrous feasts, connived at fornication, went to law before the unjust, and profaned the Lord's supper to the purposes of sensual indulgence. If such a community were to appear amongst us, we should probably deem them a company of hypocrites, and give them up

as ſtrangers to real religion. Yet Paul did not give them up, but purſued and reclaimed them. And it is worthy of our inquiry, Whether the evenneſs and regularity of character which we poſſeſs, be not greatly owing to adventitious circumſtances, rather than to the immediate influence of Chriſtianity? If all that appears amiable in us, but which in reality ariſes from no higher motives than a regard to our own intereſt or reputation, were taken out of the ſcale, and nothing left but the pure effect of Chriſtian principle, we might not be able greatly to outweigh either a Corinthian or a Hindoo *.!

The apoſtles diſtinguiſhed between a man being overtaken in a fault, and being a ſtranger to Chriſt. To the former all are too liable; but notwithſtanding this, all believers are new creatures—they cannot ſin as the wicked do, becauſe they are born of God. Sin hath not dominion over thoſe who are under grace. Paul, conſidering the temptations to which the Corinthian Chriſtians were expoſed by dwelling in a city notorious for idolatry and the works of the fleſh, uſed much forbearance, and delayed his viſit from time to time, that he might give them ſpace to repent. Having commanded one notorious offender to be put away, he waited to ſee what effect this example would have on others; but he aſſures them, that when he came he would not ſpare, but would

* Preface to vol. ii. of the Periodical Accounts relative to the Baptiſt Miſſionary Society, p. 9,—11.

purge the church of such as, not being reclaimed by gentle means, gave reason to believe they were none of Christ's, and that he would even use the miraculous powers which the Lord had conferred on the apostles to punish the disobedient. "Therefore I write these things, (says he) being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction," 2 Cor. xiii. 10.

The apostle was at this time writing to those whom he judged to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 2. whom he believed to be called into the fellowship of the Son of God, ver. 9. who were, as he believed, washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. vi. 11. and whom he expected to be obedient to the solemn injunctions he sent them, in which expectation he was not disappointed, 2 Cor. vii. 8. 18. Some among them had fallen into gross sins, perhaps some false brethren had unawares crept in; but there is nothing to lead us to suppose that any were admitted without making a credible profession. That some who set out well drew back, is unquestionable. When these made themselves manifest, they were evidently no longer members of Christ, and consequently could not be suffered to continue in a church which was one body, consisting of many members, animated by the Spirit of Christ.

We are expressly informed that a church is

bound to judge the character and conduct of its members. "What have I," says Paul, "to do to judge them also that are without, do *ye* not judge them that are within?" 1 Cor. v. 12. But does any one seriously believe that the abuses and irregularities of the first churches were recorded in Scripture to sanction similar abuses in after ages? Have we ever a hint of improper characters being suffered to continue in a church without marked disapprobation being expressed on this account? and are we to justify our deviations from the laws of Christ, by pleading the example of those against whom he so frequently testifies his displeasure on account of them?

Section II.

It has been observed, that although the theorems of Euclid are universally admitted, if they had any reference to subjects in which the interests and passions of men are concerned, they would undoubtedly have been controverted. It seems impossible to resist the force of the arguments which prove that the apostolic churches consisted of men really converted to God; but many Christians having connected themselves with societies of a complexion entirely different from the primitive churches, have used much ingenuity to justify themselves, by attempting to prove, as

far as they are able, the low ſtate of religion in the apoſtolic churches.

What is ſaid by the apoſtles Peter and Jude concerning ungodly and impure profeſſors, has been alleged to prove the mixture of characters in theſe churches. In every age there have been men profeſſing religion, who were enemies to the croſs of Chriſt. In regard to ſuch we have ſufficient directions, 1 Cor. v. 11. and Timothy is commanded to *turn away* from ſuch, although they had a form of godlineſs, 2 Epiſt. iii. 5. Do Peter and Jude contradict Paul? Did they addreſs churches conſiſting of ſuch characters? or, do they not mention the characters of theſe wicked men, to guard the churches againſt them? Why did they call them ſpots *, ver. 12. when they feaſted with them, if not to lead them to look diligently to the characters of thoſe with whom they aſſociated? But it appears from the epiſtle of Jude, that theſe men had gone out from the churches of Chriſt. They could not, it ſeems, endure the wholeſome diſcipline eſtabliſhed by the apoſtles. "Theſe are they who ſeparate themſelves, ſenſual, (ψυχικοι, *natural men*) having not the Spirit," Jude 19.

The ſtate of the churches in Aſia Minor, Rev.

* σπιλαδες, which ſhould rather be rendered rocks or ſhelves, perſons who might be the means of others making ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience. Both Peter and Jude eſpecially allude to falſe teachers who troubled the churches; they appear to be the ſame of whom Paul ſpeaks, Phil. iii. 18, 19.

ii. iii. is alſo brought forward to ſhew, that in the firſt churches there was a mixed communion. There were indeed many evils in theſe churches, but of what kind? In Epheſus they had left their firſt love, Rev. iii. 4. Their fervour and zeal were abated, but there is no evidence of a mixed communion there of ſaints and ungodly men. On the contrary, they are commended for exerciſing diſcipline in trying and rejecting falſe apoſtles, and for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, ver. 2. 6. The church at Smyrna is not blamed. That in Pergamos is commended for holding faſt Chriſt's name, and not denying his faith; and the only thing for which they are reproved and threatened is the neglect of diſcipline, in not *putting away* thoſe who held falſe doctrine, ver. 13, 14, 15. The church at Thyatira is much commended, and is reproved only for *ſuffering* a woman to ſeduce Chriſt's ſervants, ver. 20. The church at Sardis was in a backſliding ſtate, Rev. iv. 1,—6. They had a name to live while they were dead. They had loſt the life and power of religion. They are exhorted to be watchful, and to ſtrengthen *the things which remain which are ready to die*, for, ſays the Lord, I have not found thy works *perfect* before God. They are called to remember how they had received and heard. The Lord had already, by his apoſtles, delivered his laws to his church, and the neglect of theſe had probably brought them into a declining ſtate. There may

have been improper characters in the church of Sardis, but this does not neceſſarily follow from our Lord's words*. Do good men never need to be called to repentance? It is highly probable that the decay of religion had produced inattention to diſcipline; but are we to judge of the ſtate of the apoſtolic churches, by the practice of *one* ſo ſeverely condemned by the Lord? Or do any ſuppoſe, that becauſe all Chriſtians are bound to follow the practice of the churches recorded in the Scriptures with approbation, that therefore they have a right to imitate thoſe who were guilty of manifold but cenſured abuſes? Do not the examples they plead aggravate their guilt, as they are always mentioned in connection with the Lord's diſapprobation of their conduct? As individuals, we are bound to be followers of thoſe

* Our Lord mentions, that *there were a few names in Sardis who had not defiled their garments, and who ſhould walk with him in white*, but he gives them no commandment to leave the church; and hence ſome infer, that Chriſtians are not bound to ſeparate from worldly ſocieties, called churches. But the caſes are completely different. Many things were indeed reprehenſible in the church at Sardis, but it no where appears that its conſtitution was changed. This was no doubt ſtill the ſame with that of the other apoſtolic churches, and hence there was no neceſſity for calling any to ſeparate from it; but if the church had begun to walk diſorderly, and contrary to the tradition received from the apoſtles, all the diſciples of Jeſus would have been, and were called, by the authority of God, to ſeparate from it. See 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. Had they neglected the admonition given them by Jeſus, Rev. iii. thoſe who valued his authority muſt have turned away from them, as having merely a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof, 2 Tim. iii. 5.

who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes; but ſhall we preſume to vindicate adultery or murder, becauſe a very eminent ſervant of God was guilty of theſe? or ſhall we not rather take warning from ſuch paſſages of ſcripture, and avoid the rocks on which others have ſplit? 1 Cor. x. 6.

Philadelphia is commended, and exhorted to ſtedfaſtneſs. Laodicea is condemned as lukewarm, and threatened with rejection, Rev. iv. 15. &c.; but we have no hint of a mixed communion. A believer may fall into a ſtate ſimilar to that of this church, and if he does not repent he ſhall periſh; but by the warnings and threatenings of the word of God, his people are recovered, while others, after all their profeſſion, draw back to perdition; and we cannot tell but in their caſe the Lord's threatening may have produced their recovery. The Lord concludes his exhortation with words calculated to prevent them from being ſwallowed up of overmuch ſorrow: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten."—Thus it appears, that ſo far from the addreſſes to theſe churches countenancing mixed communion, the churches were reproved and threatened when they permitted improper perſons to remain amongſt them.

Another argument has been founded on our Lord's conduct to Judas It has been ſaid, that he was not removed from the table, but permitted to eat the Lord's ſupper with the other diſ-

ciples, when this ordinance was inſtituted. Hence it is inferred, that we may ſit down at his table with ungodly people, whom we know to be ſuch. But we have reaſon to believe that Judas was not preſent. John informs us that he went out immediately on receiving the ſop, xiii. 30. Now, as this could take place only at the paſſover, he could not be preſent at the Lord's ſupper which followed it. Luke differs from the other evangeliſts in the order in which he relates theſe events. Nor is this uncommon. But admitting for a moment that he was preſent: Judas was unknown to any but to the Lord. His character was not even ſuſpected. When the Lord ſaid to the diſciples, one of you ſhall betray me, each of them anſwered, "Lord, is it I?" It is not maintained, that thoſe who make a credible profeſſion of religion ſhould be excluded, nor that hypocrites may not obtain admiſſion into the beſt regulated churches. But what would our objectors infer from Judas being preſent at the Lord's ſupper? If they conclude that ſuch perſons ought not to be put away from the fellowſhip of Chriſtians, it will follow, that murderers, and characters the moſt abominable, (for we ſhall not find a worſe than his), ought to be admitted, and continued among them. Thus they not only ſet aſide the order of Chriſt's houſe, but condemn their own practice in profeſſing to exerciſe any degree of diſcipline whatever.

The parable of the tares, (Matt. xiii. 24,—30.)

is alſo adduced as a proof that we ought not ſo to diſcriminate. This proceeds on a miſtake. Our Lord has told us that the field is the *world*, ver. 38. not the church. But the view of the parable taken by ſome would prove too much, viz. that we ought not to put away any wicked perſon from a church of Chriſt, 1 Cor. v. 11. but to let both the righteous and the wicked grow there together until the harveſt. I know not that any ſociety, calling itſelf a church, profeſſes to carry matters ſo far. This conſequence, however, cannot be avoided, if the parable was deſigned to countenance a mixed communion of Chriſtians and unbelievers. In that caſe, we muſt admit an expreſs contradiction in the New Teſtament. But the intention of the parable was at once to teach the diſciples of Jeſus, that he permits no perſecution for religion, and to ſhew them the reaſon of his ſparing wicked men in the world.

In the kingdom of Iſrael, the ſword was to be uſed againſt idolaters, &c. (read Deut. xiii. 6,—17.) but now this is at an end. Vengeance belongs to God, and although he has delegated power to magiſtrates to uſe the ſword for the preſervation of order in civil ſociety, he has given to none the power of puniſhing men for unbelief and falſe religion.

Beſides, we are informed by Jeſus that an *enemy* had ſown the tares. Surely this ought to make every one of his profeſſed diſciples (who apply the parable to church members) tremble at the

thought of admitting improper perſons, leſt in doing ſo they fulfil the deſign of Satan. The tares were ſown while men ſlept; now the diſciples of Jeſus, and eſpecially his miniſters, ought to watch particularly againſt thoſe devices of the enemy of which the Lord has warned them. In ſhort, although the parable has been interpreted ſo as to ſet aſide all diſcipline towards members already admitted, it cannot be converted into an excuſe for neglecting the moſt careful examination of thoſe who apply for admiſſion into a church, but in this view muſt be conſidered as a ſerious warning in regard to this. 'When the devil brought in the tares,' ſays Preſident Edwards, 'it is manifeſt he brought in ſomething that did not belong there. He counteracted the owner of the field, and did it under the very notion of croſſing his deſign. An enemy (it is ſaid in the parable) hath done it. How doth this conſiſt with the tares having a lawful right, by the owner's warrant and appointment, to have a ſtanding in this field?

'If the great Phyſician of ſouls hath built his church as an infirmary in compaſſion to thoſe that are ſick, for this end, that they may be brought in and healed there, ſhall it be ſaid with ſurpriſe when ſuch are found there, How came theſe ſick people here? and ſhall the compaſſionate Phyſician who built the hoſpital ſay, "An enemy hath done this." *Thoſe who act on theſe principles do that at noon-day, in the preſence of God, angels*

and men, which the devil doth in the dead of night, when men ſlept *.'

The following obſervations on this parable by Mr Giſborne, a clergyman of the church of England, are juſt and pertinent. 'God abſtains from commiſſioning his miniſtering angels to go forth and root up the tares, leſt with them they ſhould alſo root up the wheat. Men, impelled by the deſires, and conſtrained by the neceſſities of their nature, to live according to the intention of Providence in ſociety, find themſelves, in various reſpects, cloſely united, notwithſtanding radical differences of views and of character. Neighbourhood, relationſhip, lawful occupations, common intereſt, mutual advantage, and the requiſite offices and intercourſe of life, bind together, by numerous and inſeparable ties, the ſervant of God and the ſervant of Satan. The righteous and the wicked are ſo firmly connected, that affliction cannot overtake the latter without alſo reaching the former. The tares do not grow up ſingly and ſeparately among the wheat, but are ſo twiſted round it, and ſo entangled among it, ſo interwoven with it, that to pull them up without pulling up the wheat is impoſſible. Leſs injury will reſult to the crop of good grain from their continuance, than from an attempt to extirpate them.——

'Suppoſe an individual to be diſtinguiſhed in wickedneſs, proud, ſenſual, diſſolute, profane, a deſpiſer of religion, a teacher and encourager of

* Preſident Edwards' Reply to Williams, p. 103. Boſton 1752.

ſin: "Why," you aſk, "is this man permitted to live and to ſpread miſchief around him year after year? no general calamity is requiſite for his removal; why does not death ſingle him out at once?" How know you but that the man may live to repent? But not to dwell on that poſſibility, are there no other perſons for whoſe ſake he may be ſpared? Is there no plant of wheat which might be fatally injured, if this weed were now plucked up? Has he not parents whoſe preſent intereſts are cloſely involved in his? Has he not a wife or a child who may be left deſtitute if he ſhould be cut off? Has he neither brother, nor relative, nor friend, nor acquaintance, to whom his exiſtence is at preſent uſeful, or to whom Omniſcience may foreſee that at a future period it will be advantageous? May not even his vices be overruled by the providence of God into beneficial warnings to others? May not his pride teach ſome to cheriſh meekneſs? May not his intemperance evince the excellence of ſobriety? May not his irreligion impreſs on others the beauty of holineſs? In ſeaſons of cold, or of drought, or of immoderate rain, the proſperity of a weed may for a time afford uſeful ſhelter to a ſtem of wheat. May not this weed be as yet ſuffered to grow that it may anſwer a ſimilar purpoſe *?'

I conclude this ſection by referring to ſome paſſages in the late Dr Erſkine's Diſſertation on the Character and Privileges of the Chriſtian Church.

* Giſborne's Sermons, vol. ii p. 185, 186. 2d edition.

'The words εκκλησια, קהל, ſignify a people not only called, but gathered by a call, who hearken to and comply with the offers of the goſpel, and are called "choſen and faithful," Rev. xvii. 14. who are called by that inward call of the Spirit, which renders the outward call of the goſpel effectual. A call attended with invincible power, like that to Matthew, Matt. ix. 9. "follow me;" or that, John xi. 43. "Lazarus come forth;" nay, like that by which God "calls the things that are not as though they were," Rom. vii. 17. and "commands light to ariſe out of darkneſs," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence we read of the called according to God's purpoſe, Rom. viii. 28. and of the purpoſe of God according to election ſtanding, not of works, but of him that calleth, Rom. ix. 11. So that we may define the Chriſtian church, a ſociety of perſons effectually called, or a company of penitents, united by faith and love to Chriſt as their head, and to one another as members of his myſtical body, and on every proper occaſion outwardly diſcovering this union. Now, if the church of Chriſt is a ſociety of perſons who obey the goſpel call, it is evident hypocrites are no members of that church *. For the

* It is true that no hypocrite is a member of the church of Chriſt, if by the church we underſtand thoſe who are members of his body. But the word church, as has been ſhewn, beſides ſignifying the general aſſembly of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in heaven, alſo means a ſociety of perſons who give ſatisfactory evidence of diſcipleſhip. Falſe brethren may re-

goſpel calls to a humble penitent reliance upon Chriſt, not to a bare profeſſion of Chriſtianity; and invites us to fellowſhip with Jeſus, 1 Cor. i. 9. and a right to his kingdom and glory, 1 Pet. v. 10. not to any external ſociety and advantages. The outward call of the goſpel conſtitutes none members of the church, ſave thoſe who comply with it. Elſe even infidels, and openly profane perſons, who hear the goſpel preached, would be members of the church. We are invited to come to the church, having on the wedding garment. To come without it we are not allowed. God has no where enjoined thoſe who want faith to profeſs it. Indeed it is impoſſible that the God of truth ſhould enjoin a falſehood. When, therefore, we require a profeſſion of faith in order to church privileges, we, on the matter, acknowledge faith itſelf neceſſary. For the only reaſon why we regard a profeſſion, is our ſuppoſing that he who makes it is a true believer. Faith, or rather the righteouſneſs it receives, we conſider as the foundation of his title to church privileges, and profeſſion only as an evidence of that title. He who makes a credible profeſſion, is accounted a member of the church, becauſe from ſuch profeſſion, as an evidence, we judge that he poſſeſſes the proper condition of church memberſhip, not

main for a time in ſuch a ſociety. Although the Doctor's remarks are in general excellent, there is ſome degree of obſcurity in what he ſays, from not attending to this diſtinction.

becauſe ſuch profeſſion is itſelf that condition. So that we reckon none members of the viſible church, without reckoning them members of the inviſible church likewiſe, or, in other words, without reckoning them united to Chriſt by a true and lively faith, and entitled to heaven through his perfect righteouſneſs. The union and communion of church members, one with another, is founded only on their union with Chriſt. Conſequently, where there is no real union with him, there can be no real union with the members of his myſtical body.'——'He only has a title to the honourable name of Chriſtian, who departs from iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. If any man has not the Spirit of Chriſt in him, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. Chriſt is the door of the ſheep, and therefore none are God's ſheep who enter not in at this door, John x. 7. xiv. 6. He that believeth not, whatever he profeſs, has no part in Chriſt's ſalvation, but is condemned already. Nothing external is of any avail under the goſpel, unleſs accompanied with the new creature, or faith that worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. vi. 15. Old things are done away, and all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. The Meſſias is of quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord, and does not judge after the ſight of the eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears, Iſa. xi. 3. It is the heart, not the outward appearance which he regards. The moſt ſplendid performances, if without charity, he ac-

counts as nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The Lord only knoweth them that are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Consequently that which constitutes one a member of the Christian church, is invisible to the human eye. Believing with the heart, as well as confessing with the mouth, is a necessary condition of the gospel salvation, Rom. x. 9. Those who are only outwardly, and in profession religious, are of the synagogue of Satan, Rev. ii. 9. iii. 9. spots in our feasts, 2 Pet. xi. 13. Jude 13. children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. tares sowed by the wicked one, Matt. xiii. 38. false brethren brought in, or crept in unawares, Gal. ii. 4. Jude 4. having no lot nor portion in the blessings of Christ's purchase, because yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 21. 23. Hence Paul pronounces a general sentence of excommunication against false-hearted professors, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema maranatha." And, indeed, who can be more detestable, and worthy of a more dreadful curse, than he who harbours in his heart enmity against Christ, under the mask of pretended friendship? In the day of judgment Christ will profess to all such, Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity, Matt. vii. 22. He could not have said, in so absolute terms, that he was never related to them, if he had owned them, while on earth, as his church and people. Does not that rebuke, Matt. xxii. 12. "Friend,

how cameſt thou in hither, not having on the wedding-garment," import, that hypocrites have no right to a place among God's people? We are told, the man thus rebuked was ſpeechleſs, having no excuſe to make for his conduct. But he might have excuſed it, if bare profeſſion was all that was neceſſary to render one a member of the viſible church.'——'Therefore, *every particular viſible church was conſidered by the apoſtles as compoſed only of true believers;* and theſe not baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, were accounted by them no members of Chriſt's myſtical body. What then ſhall we ſay of thoſe who in all their actions are animated and influenced by the devil, who live after the fleſh, and retain nothing of the Chriſtian ſave the empty name? Chriſtians are as lively ſtones, built up a ſpiritual houſe, an holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And is that, think you, the character of men dead in treſpaſſes and ſins?'——He then conſiders the deſign of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, and clearly proves that they ought only to be adminiſtered to believers: that miniſters, indeed, may lawfully adminiſter them to hypocrites, and ſo, ſays the Doctor, 'may a judge lawfully aſſign you a ſum of money, when, by credible witneſſes, you prove your right to it, though after all you have bribed the witneſſes to perjure themſelves.' The ſacraments, he ſays, are no inſtituted means of converſion, being intended to ſtrengthen faith

where it is, not to produce it where it is not. He obſerves, if reflections on the ſin of unworthily partaking of the ſacraments, produce the converſion of a hypocrite, reflections on murder or adultery may do the ſame. God may bring good out of evil.

'Has the unconverted profeſſor of religion,' he aſks, 'a better claim to the fellowſhip of the faithful than the infidel or profane? Are the living and the dead united? Do falſehood and diſſimulation render men holy? So ſoon as the hypocriſy of a profeſſor is manifeſted, he is no longer looked upon as a member of the church.'——'1 Cor. v. 10,—13. is brought as an evidence that men may be brethren, and within the church, who yet are covetous, extortioners, or living in ſome other courſe of preſumptuous ſin. But though this paſſage ſhews that bad men may be tolerated in the world, and civil intercourſe lawfully kept up with them, it equally ſhews, that church-fellowſhip with thoſe whom we know to be bad is unlawful. The Iſraelites, in the time of the paſſover, were to ſearch, and caſt out of their houſes all the leaven that was in them, and that was allowed to be in them at other times.'——'Hypocrites may lurk in the church, as leaven might lurk in a houſe in the time of the paſſover, notwithſtanding the moſt diligent ſearch. But hypocrites have no right to be there, and, ſo ſoon as they are diſcovered, muſt be turned out. They are called *brethren*, 1 Cor. v. 11. They are mem-

bers of the church in the opinion of others. But brethren in truth they are not. They ſeem to be within, and indeed are within the church, as to the body, but they are without it as to the ſoul. They are within, in the ſame ſenſe as leaven, which ought to have been without. It deſerves our notice, that the apoſtle does not ſpeak of ſome of the church as within, and of the world as without. All then who belong to the church are within, or members of the church inviſible. Some are ſo truly, and in the eyes of God; others only apparently, and in the eyes of men. The firſt have a title to be within; the ſecond have no title. If we reckon them within, it is only becauſe their profeſſion being credible, we charitably believe it ſincere, and that conſequently they are united to Chriſt. And hence, ſo ſoon as we find from their courſe of life that their profeſſion was deceitful, it becomes our duty to renounce communion with them.'——

'Thus it has been ſufficiently proved, that a church is a ſociety of ſaints, ſincerely profeſſing the ſame faith, partaking of the ſame ſacraments, intereſted in the ſame ſpiritual privileges, and entitled to the ſame heavenly bleſſings; and that therefore hypocrites belong not to that ſociety. This is the Bible idea of the word church, and therefore it ought to be received, however it differ from faſhionable opinions.'——

'The greater part of modern Chriſtians have, I acknowledge, in their ſentiments of the nature

of the church, widely deviated from Scripture and antiquity. And the fiction of a visible church really in covenant with God, and yet partly made up of hypocrites, has almost universally prevailed. What were the causes of this I stay not to enquire. One thing, however, deserves to be remarked. Truth, in this particular, has gained signal advantages over vulgar prejudice and systematic ideas, even where it has not enabled men entirely to shake off these fetters. Many able Lutheran divines, who espouse the common distinction of a visible and invisible church, and warmly oppose the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of saints, have notwithstanding asserted and proved, that the proper notion of the word church, in the New Testament, is, the congregation of the inwardly sanctified, or, as others express it, those elected to eternal life, and against whom the gates of hell shall never prevail.'——

'The spirit and frame of the epistles would be perfectly unaccountable, should we suppose them partly addressed to hypocrites and self-deceivers, who had the form, but were strangers to the power of godliness, and thus were every moment in danger of dropping into the pit of destruction. Doubtless, had that been the case, they would have been calculated, as sermons recorded in other parts of Scripture directed to such people are, to awaken in them a sense of their hazardous condition, and to excite them to fly from the wrath to come.'——

'Every particular church mentioned in the New Teſtament, is deſcribed as conſiſting of perſons united to Chriſt by faith and love, and inwardly holy. We muſt either ſay that in theſe times no hypocrites were intermixed with the church, or that, though intermixed with it, they were no part of it. The firſt is improbable. The inſtance of Simon the ſorcerer proves, that in admitting men to the church, the apoſtles did not always act by the gift of diſcerning ſpirits. Paul conſiders it as poſſible, that men might give all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned, who yet wanted charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Ananias and Sapphira, Hymenæus and Alexander, were for a time deemed ſincere by their fellow profeſſors.'——'Since then the apoſtles addreſſed ſocieties in different places outwardly aſſociated for divine worſhip, by properties peculiar to good men, it follows, that they conſidered none elſe as members of theſe ſocieties.'——'Churches, therefore, ought to put away from among them, thoſe whoſe profeſſion is diſcovered by their practice to have been inſincere. To renounce fellowſhip with ſuch, Chriſtian charity forbids not, nay duty requires *.'—The authority of Dr Erſkine is not brought forward to eſtabliſh a doubtful point, but to call the attention of Chriſtians to the force of truth on the mind of a man endowed with abilities for judging of it, and

* Diſſertation on the Character and Privileges of the Apoſtolic Churches, *paſſim*.

who muſt have received a contrary bias both from education and habit.

Section III.

Having, I hope, eſtabliſhed the fact, that the primitive churches were compoſed of ſuch only of whom it was meet for the apoſtles to think that a work of grace was begun in them, we conclude with ſome obſervations on the admiſſion of members into churches amongſt ourſelves.

The inſtructions in the word of God on this ſubject, although indirect, are amply ſufficient to guide us. We are clearly taught of what members churches of Chriſt ſhould conſiſt, and the evidences are fully laid down by which we are to diſtinguiſh them.

Thoſe who are connected with churches where diſcipline is neglected, excuſe themſelves for countenancing impure communion by ſaying they cannot judge the heart. They maintain, that in order to admit a member, we have only to aſcertain the irreproachableneſs of his moral character, and that he poſſeſſes a competent knowledge of the doctrines of the Scripture. This ſtandard is, in truth, as high as can be fixed, and higher than is applied in any national church, but it comes far ſhort of a proper teſt of real religion.

Good men are at no loſs in forming a judg-

ment of character on other occaſions. They do not heſitate to ſpeak of certain perſons as real believers, and of others as at beſt doubtful characters. Indeed without this, there are many precepts which cannot be obeyed. We cannot aſſociate with the people of God as ſuch, nor expreſs that ſpecial love which we owe to the genuine diſciples of Chriſt, without forming a judgment of characters. We cannot even ſuit our converſation ſo as to be uſeful to thoſe in whoſe company we are. We ſhall be in danger of crying peace to the formal profeſſor or ſelf-righteous Phariſee. But Chriſt has given us a ſtandard by which to judge: "By their fruits ye ſhall know them." By attending to their general converſation and conduct, as well as to their knowledge and profeſſed experience, we may generally form a proper judgment.

A church may after all be miſtaken in ſome whom they admit. The apoſtles probably were ſo as to Simon Magus, and many others; but this ought to make us the more careful to receive none, without what appears to us ſatisfactory evidence that Chriſt has received them. We ought not to conſider ourſelves as having a right to receive or to exclude, but endeavour to aſcertain by evidence who are really believers, and conſider the evidence of this as Chriſt's voice to the church, commanding us to admit them. After they are admitted, they muſt alſo be diligently

watched over, and retained or put away according to their fruits.

There is no objection to the propriety of the distinction between visible and real Christians, provided by visible Christians we understand those whom we believe to be real Christians, and who appear to us, on proper evidence, to have the Spirit of Christ. If by visible Christianity be meant any thing short of the appearance of real Christianity; if a man being born in what is called a Christian country, being baptized, and not grosly immoral, constitutes him, as we think, a visible Christian, the term is unscriptural and absurd. If we do not use proper means to ascertain whether those applying to be members of a church are real Christians or not, we neglect our duty to Christ, and cast a stumbling-block in their way.

It is not enough that a man wishes to join a church, and professes to believe: it is not enough that he can answer our inquiries on the leading doctrines of the gospel; and that he may not be chargeable with gross sin. This may be the case, and he may yet be a stranger to Christ. We know that the word of God effectually works in all who believe, and we are bound to inquire what effect this has produced on him. Whenever the truth is believed, a great change takes place on the mind. We must not fix our standard too high, nor consider great attainments in knowledge or in the Christian life to be necessary in order to

the admiſſion of a perſon into a church. We are only to endeavour to diſcover whether he has paſſed from death to life. If we omit particular inquiry on this ſubject, we neither do juſtice to the perſon applying, nor to the church. It is pleaſing to think that the intereſt of both is always united; if it be advantageous for a perſon to be admitted, it is for the benefit of the church, and not otherwiſe. If, by receiving a man into a church, we could make him a Chriſtian, it would be deſirable to receive all who apply; but a church of Chriſt, we have ſeen, is a ſociety of real believers, and by receiving any others but thoſe, we endanger the church, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and we deceive thoſe who are enemies to God, and may lull their conſciences aſleep to their eternal perdition. This may ſhew us the abſurdity of what is generally ſpoken of under the name of *the judgment of charity;* hoping, as ſome ſay, againſt hope. Charity is love, and love worketh no ill to our neighbour; but can we do one a greater injury, than to receive him as a brother in Chriſt without endeavouring to aſcertain whether this be his real character?

Some ſay, if a man has faith it matters not to us how he came by it. True; but the queſtion is, Has he faith? This cannot be known without inquiring into his experience. There may be diverſity in this; ſome have obtained precious faith, it may be, very gradually, others

more ſuddenly, and with circumſtances more ſenſible. But every one is born ſpiritually blind, and if he has been brought into marvellous light, he will ſurely be able to give ſome ſcriptural account of it. There is no religion without experience. If a man ſay he believes, and has not felt the energy of the truth upon his mind, changing the objects of his purſuit, and making him a new creature, he deceives himſelf, and we ought not to favour the deception.

It has been taken for granted by many, without the ſhadow of a proof, that in the apoſtles days a verbal profeſſion of faith was of itſelf deemed ſufficient. This has been argued from the caſe of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 27. Philip informed him, that if he believed with all his heart he might be baptized, and upon his profeſſion baptized him. But they had had previous converſation. The eunuch ſhewed that he was ſenſible of his ignorance, and deſired inſtruction; they had travelled ſome diſtance together, and Philip had reaſon to judge from the manner in which he received the truth, and the remarks he made, that God had opened his underſtanding. The three thouſand who were baptiſed and added to the church on the day of Pentecoſt gave more evidence than a mere profeſſion. They were pricked in their heart, and relieved by the goſpel; they received the word with joy. The powerful and viſible effects produced by the truth on their mind, were well calculated to ſatisfy all,

that when they ſaid they believed in Chriſt, they ſpoke the language of the heart *.

But a profeſſion of faith in the apoſtles days was very different from the ſame profeſſion at preſent. By profeſſing to believe, men at that time were ſubjected to many inconveniences; the profeſſion was a reproach. With us, men are offended if their Chriſtianity be called in queſtion. Thoſe even who by their writings have moſt decidedly oppoſed Chriſtianity, take it amiſs when they receive the name of infidels †; conſequently a man ſaying he believes, ought to have little weight.

We do not mean to allege that the way of God is ſtrictly uniform in the exerciſes of his people. With ſome the work of converſion is more rapid,

* Let it alſo be obſerved, that all theſe were Jews, the people of God, profeſſing the faith of Abraham. When the goſpel began to be preached, they were not unchurched, but were informed of the joyful tidings, that God had fulfilled the promiſe made to the fathers, in raiſing up Jeſus again, Acts xiii. 33. To him they were now called to ſubmit as their anointed king, and whoſoever rejected him was cut off from the people, according to God's ancient ordinance againſt the diſobedient. Thoſe who believed, forfeited none of their ancient privileges; on the contrary, they were much enlarged. A profeſſion of faith in Chriſt made by a Jew was therefore all that was neceſſary to his being acknowledged as a brother. The caſe was different as to Gentiles, but in either a *profeſſion* of faith was very different from a profeſſion among us.

† See Hume's Letter to Dr Blair, *apud* Campbell on Miracles, laſt edition.

with others more gradual. Some may have been brought under the impreſſion of the truth in very early years, and others may have been led ſo inſenſibly from ſtep to ſtep, that they may be unable to point out the preciſe time when they were brought to know the truth. This is not neceſſary. The great matter is to endeavour to aſcertain if in any degree they indeed know and feel their guilty and miſerable condition as ſinners, and are living by faith on the Son of God. Thoſe who profeſs to have known the Lord for ſome time, may be expected to give additional evidence, by their general conduct and converſation.

It ſhould be our great aim not to decline in judgment to the right hand or the left, neither to make ſad the hearts of thoſe whom God has not made ſad, nor to cry peace where he hath not ſpoken it. It muſt be our ſtudy to ſeparate between the precious and the vile; we violate otherwiſe the divine law, Ezek. xxii. 26.; and to the right performance of this, as of every other duty, much prayer to the Lord is neceſſary.

Every new member ought to be admitted by the unanimous voice of the church. *All* are to walk in unity as brethren, they ought therefore *all* to have confidence in each other as the diſciples of Chriſt. This is in fact the bond which unites the members, and therefore the ſubſtance of the evidence which the paſtors and thoſe who have converſed with them have obtained, muſt

be ſubmitted to the church *, that they may not only receive them as members, but love them for the truth's ſake.

Although we are not to receive any one without ſatisfactory evidence of his being a true diſciple of Chriſt, we ought to beware of injuring the character of any whom we reject, by ſpeaking evil and circulating an unfavourable report of them. We are not accountable to the world or to man for our admiſſions or refuſals; but when any are rejected, it is highly important to ſpeak to them faithfully and affectionately, and to ſhew them that our conduct proceeds from love to them, as well as from obedience to the laws of Chriſt.

* It may ſeem in theory very difficult, that a number of perſons ſhould be of the ſame mind concerning an individual's admiſſion; but the difficulty does not occur in practice. Sometimes a delay may be neceſſary to ſatisfy certain of the church; but it will never be found that a Chriſtian will be rejected through humour or caprice. Were any thing of this kind to appear, it would argue a ſtate of mind highly improper, and would become a fit ſubject of diſcipline.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE OFFICES IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

SECTION I.

THE Lord Jeſus, by the miniſtry of his apoſtles, not only commanded his people to aſſociate together, but alſo ordained that certain offices ſhould ſubſiſt in their ſocieties. We have in Scripture ample directions reſpecting the nature of theſe offices, and the qualifications neceſſary for diſcharging them.

Paul, ſpeaking of the aſcenſion of Jeſus, and of the accompliſhment of the promiſe that he ſhould give gifts unto men, obſerves, "he gave ſome apoſtles, and ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers, for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt," Eph. iv. 11. To the ſame purpoſe he ſays, "God hath ſet ſome in the church, firſt apoſtles; ſecondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diverſities of tongues," 1 Cor. xii. 28.

It is not eaſy, perhaps, to diſcriminate the va-

rious ſorts of ſupernatural endowments mentioned in the New Teſtament; but of this we are certain, that ſome offices in the church were temporary, and others intended to continue.

We are in no danger of confounding the ſtated with the extraordinary offices in the apoſtolic churches. No directions are given reſpecting the choice of perſons to occupy the latter. This the great Head of the church reſerved for himſelf; nor have we a particular account of the various duties to which ſome of them were called. This was unneceſſary, as they were either guided by the immediate and extraordinary influences of the Spirit, in the conduct they were to purſue, or were under the perſonal inſpection of the apoſtles.

As to the ſtated offices, the word of God contains minute directions to guide our choice, together with a clear account of the duties connected with them. It is to be feared, that the alleged difficulties in diſtinguiſhing between the extraordinary and ſtated offices, have ariſen more from a deſire to vindicate churches evidently unſcriptural, or the adherence of individuals to theſe, than from any darkneſs in the ſubject itſelf.

Whether any miraculous gifts ſhall ever be reſtored to the church, time muſt determine. At all events, we are ſure that the ſtated offices ſhall continue to the end. Theſe are neceſſary to the proper regulation and to the wellbeing of every church, whereas the extraordinary offices ſeem not to have been ſtationary in any church.

The ordinary offices are calculated for every ſituation and emergency in which the churches can be placed. The extraordinary offices did not ſuperſede them, nor are theſe neceſſary to their exiſtence. The extraordinary offices of which we read in the New Teſtament, are apoſtles, prophets, and evangeliſts.

We have already had occaſion to ſpeak of the office of the apoſtles, and of the deference which was to be paid to thoſe who held it, by the moſt highly favoured in the churches, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. They were even poſſeſſed of miraculous power to puniſh thoſe members of the churches who deſpiſed their authority. Thus John threatens to puniſh Diotrephes, 3 John 10. They had in them a readineſs to revenge all diſobedience, 2 Cor. x. 6. This power Paul, once and again, aſſures the Corinthians he would employ, without ſparing, if he found matters in the ſtate he ſuſpected.

It is evident, from the nature of the office itſelf, that the apoſtles can have no ſucceſſors. They fully and faithfully delivered the laſt revelation which God ſhall give to man. Dr Campbell argues that the apoſtles could have no ſucceſſors,

1. From the indiſpenſable qualifications for the office. An apoſtle muſt be one who had ſeen Chriſt after his reſurrection, 1 Cor. ix. 1. xv. 8. for he was ordained to be a witneſs of Chriſt's reſurrection, Acts i. 22. x. 41. &c.

2. The apoſtles were diſtinguiſhed by ſpecial

prerogatives which descended to none after them, receiving their mission from Christ, the power of conferring the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and the knowledge by inspiration of the whole doctrine of Christ.

3. They were universal bishops; the whole church was their charge, and the whole earth their sphere.

4. We have full proof that no idea of succession to the office was entertained in their own age, or in the times immediately succeeding, for no one, on the death of an apostle, was ever substituted in his room, and when the original college became extinct, the title became extinct with it.

The apostles were ambassadors for Christ *, and having delivered their message, and declared the whole counsel of God, which is contained in their writings, it was unnecessary that any successors to them should be raised up. They are the twelve foundations of the church, Eph. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14.

We read of *prophets* who foretold future events, as Agabus, Acts xxi. 10. although certainly the term *prophecy* is not confined to this

* The term *ambassadors* has been applied to ordinary ministers of the gospel, but improperly. The apostles were ambassadors in the proper sense of the word, but preachers have now only to repeat, enlarge upon, and to impress on their hearers what they taught. To give such the title of ambassadors, tends to weaken the authority of apostolic testimony.

in the New Teſtament. There were alſo prophets in the church at Antioch, Acts xiii. 1. Perhaps Mark and Luke, who have written a part of the New Teſtament, were prophets. At any rate, it was an extraordinary office, for which men were qualified, and to which they were called by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; and thoſe who held it might ſay, as Paul does of his apoſtleſhip, "not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt," Gal. i. 1. It is true, propheſying ſeems ſometimes to be put for the mutual exhortations of the brethren, 1 Cor. xiv. 31. "Ye may all propheſy, one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted;" and he who propheſieth is ſaid to ſpeak to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort, 1 Cor. xiv. 3. but it is alſo evident from the paſſages quoted above, as well as from others, that the term *prophet* is uſed in the New Teſtament to denote a perſon poſſeſſed of extraordinary gifts peculiar to that period, and they appear, by the manner in which they are claſſed, to have been next to the apoſtles.

Evangeliſts were aſſiſtants to the apoſtles. Their charge was not confined to any particular church. Philip and Timothy are expreſsly ſtyled evangeliſts. Titus, although the name is no where given him, was evidently employed in the duties of the ſame office. He was left in Crete to ſet in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city, according to the directions of Paul, Tit. i. 5. Timothy was left in Epheſus, not as

an elder or biſhop of the church, but to charge ſome to teach no other doctrine than that delivered by the apoſtles, 1 Tim. i. 3. He ſometimes accompanied Paul, and at other times was ſent by him to viſit and confirm the churches. Both Timothy and Titus were ſuperintendants under the apoſtles, and acted by a ſpecial commiſſion; they were employed in viſiting and ſetting in order various churches, and to both, directions are given reſpecting the characters of thoſe who were to hold ſtated and ordinary offices.

The ſtated offices in all the churches were *elders* and *deacons* *.

It is unneceſſary to ſpend much time in proving that biſhop and elder were, in apoſtolic times, ſynonymous terms. We juſt mention one or two paſſages, which muſt prove this to every impartial perſon. Paul ſent for the *elders* of the church at Epheſus, and exhorted them to take heed to themſelves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghoſt had made them *biſhops*, επισκοπους, Acts xx. 17. 28.

Titus was left in Crete to ordain *elders* in every city, as he had appointed him. If any man, ſays he, be blameleſs, the huſband of one wife; for a *biſhop* muſt be blameleſs, &c. Tit. i. 5. 7.

* Such was the judgment of Wickliffe: 'Only two orders of clerks,' ſaid he, 'did ſuffice in the church, prieſts and deacons; neither was there any diſtinction in the times of the apoſtles, of popes, patriarchs, archbiſhops, and biſhops. Theſe the emperor's pride did find out.' Fox's Acts and Monuments, vol. i. p. 414. edit. 1610.

Peter exhorts the *elders* to feed the flock of God, επισκοπουντες; doing the office of a *biſhop*, not by conſtraint, 1 Pet. v. 2.

The apoſtles were often obliged to flee from the places where they preached the goſpel. Their ſtay, in general, even while not perſecuted, was uſually ſhort. We read of Paul ſeparating the diſciples, Acts xix. 9. and, indeed, wherever any believed and were baptized, they would neceſſarily be ſeparated from their former aſſociates. If Jews, they were caſt out of the ſynagogue; and if Gentiles, they could no more have fellowſhip with demons or falſe gods. The two great commandments given by the apoſtles were, that Chriſtians ſhould believe on the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another. To promote faith and love, the diſciples were enjoined not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together. The Lord had graciouſly promiſed to be in the midſt of two or three met in his name; but ſtill they were incomplete, and not fully furniſhed with all requiſite for their ſpiritual welfare, till provided with paſtors or elders. To ordain ſuch, the apoſtles either reviſited the churches they had planted, Acts xiv. 21,—23. or for this end ſent proper perſons, ſuch as Titus.

The buſineſs of an elder is to labour in the word and doctrine, and alſo to rule in the church of God, 1 Tim. v. 17. iii. 5. To rule means not merely to preſide in the meetings of the church, and to take care that all things are done decently

and in order, according to the will of Chriſt; but alſo to watch over the members, to admoniſh or reprove them, as their circumſtances require. To this rule the members were bound to ſubmit. "Obey them," ſays the apoſtle, "that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves; for they watch for your ſouls as they that muſt give account," Heb. xiii. 17. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have ſpoken to you the word of the Lord," ver. 7. "We beſeech you, brethren, to acknowledge them which labour among you, and are over you * in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly in love for their work's ſake," 1 Theſſ. v. 12. Here the peace of the church is immediately connected with affectionate regard, deference, honour, and ſubmiſſion to the elders.

Conſidering the importance of this office, we might expect the qualifications neceſſary for the diſcharge of it to be clearly pointed out. Accordingly they are ſo, 1 Tim. iii. Tit. i.

The name *elder* was probably borrowed from the Jews. Thoſe advanced in age would naturally be preferred for this office, if their qualifications were in other reſpects equal. Age commands reſpect, and is uſually connected with experience and wiſdom. Timothy was a young man, and this might tend to prevent his receiving the reſpect due to the office he held. Hence

* προϊσταμένους, tranſlated *ruleth*, Rom. xii. 8. 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. 12. v. 17.

Paul says, "Let no man despise thy youth," 1 Tim. iv. 12.

A question has arisen respecting the choice of pastors. Does this belong to the people, or did the apostles or evangelists ordain those whom they thought best qualified, without consulting them? An argument for the latter opinion has been founded on the description of the character and qualifications of elders being addressed, not to the churches, but to the evangelists Timothy and Titus, and on their being directed to lay hands suddenly on no man.

In truth, the appointment of elders, in one view, was not left either to the apostles or to the churches. The Lord bestowed the necessary gifts upon those whom he intended for the work, and gave commandment by his apostles, that only such as possessed these gifts should be called to the office. All that was left to men, therefore, was to judge who were possessed of proper qualifications.

The epistles to Timothy and Titus treat expressly of this subject, and are of equal authority with every other part of revelation. They were intended, not merely as instructions to them, but to the churches among which they laboured, and to all Christian churches to the end of the world.

Timothy and Titus would doubtless enforce these instructions on the consciences of their brethren; they would warn them against pleasing themselves in this as in other matters, and exhort

them, by willing ſubjection to Chriſt, to approve themſelves to him as in every other part of their conduct. This is equally the duty of any man in the preſent day, by whoſe labours a church may be collected; and if the church refuſe to walk by the rule of Scripture in this or in any other reſpect, he is called, after proper conſideration and forbearance, to turn away from them, as neglecting the ordinances of Chriſt. But if he ſhould attempt to impoſe elders upon them (although it may be perſons properly qualified) without their free conſent, he would manifeſt a ſpirit very oppoſite from that of the apoſtles. So far were they from trying to exclude the churches from whatever they were engaged in, that they requeſted and uſed their aſſiſtance in caſes where we might imagine they would not have conſulted them. After the apoſtaſy of Judas, Peter addreſſed the diſciples, and ſhewed the neceſſity of chuſing an apoſtle whoſe qualifications he deſcribed. Accordingly they nominated two, and then referred the deciſion to the Lord himſelf. The apoſtles did not interfere in the choice of deacons, but left this to the brethren, Acts vi. 3. although they would doubtleſs have pointed out their error, had they choſen men not poſſeſſed of the qualifications they had ſhewn to be neceſſary. When Paul went to Jeruſalem with the contribution of the churches, the perſon who accompanied him was not choſen by himſelf, but ordained (χειροτονηθεις) by the churches, 2 Cor. viii. 19. So careful were

these eminent servants of God not to exercise lordship over their brethren!

That the pastoral relation between teachers or pastors and a church can only be formed by mutual consent, is not only manifest from the conduct of the apostles recorded in the Scriptures, but is necessarily implied in the nature of this relation, considered in every view. It is not less absurd to maintain, that because we have no direct example of a church chusing its elders, that this matter is left undetermined, than it would be to argue, that since the word of God has not declared that the marriage union is to be entered into by mutual choice, it is doubtful whether this be required. Such obvious principles as necessarily result from our nature and circumstances, are frequently taken for granted in Scripture. Some may take occasion from this to affirm, that it contains no precise rule for church-order, but with equal propriety they might add, that it is as deficient respecting rules for individual conduct. It is not easy to see what important purpose would have been answered by that minuteness which some appear to deem essential to perspicuity and a divine appointment. We have already observed, that the instructions which respect moral conduct are delivered precisely in the same way as those which respect church-order. It is much to be feared, that many who at present will not admit the obligation of the practices of the first churches, as the laws of Christ for the

focial worſhip of his people, would not have obeyed them under whatever form they might have been delivered. There cannot be a more expreſs, perſpicuous, or indiſputable commandment than that delivered by our Lord, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. yet how many Chriſtians habitually and knowingly diſobey it, and remain in ſituations which render obedience to it impracticable!

The elders in each church compoſed a preſbytery, that is, the elderſhip. This word (πρεσβυτερίον) only occurs once in the New Teſtament, 1 Tim. iv. 14. but when we read of the elders of a particular church, the ſame thing is meant. That there was in every church, when regularly ſet in order, a plurality of paſtors, is evident. I cannot expreſs my views better on this ſubject, than by quoting the following paſſage from an intereſting narrative lately publiſhed. 'It is evident to me,' ſays Mr Ballantine, 'that primitive churches had a plurality of paſtors, or a preſbytery, in every congregation. There were *elders* in the church at Jeruſalem, Acts xv. 2. 4. Paul, when he was at Miletus, ſent for the *elders* of the church at Epheſus, Acts xx. 17. and there appear to have been ſeveral of them in that church, from his manner of addreſſing them on that occaſion, and from the direction he gives Timothy concerning them, 1 Tim. v. 17. Again we read, Acts xiv. 23. "And when they had ordained them *elders in every church*, and had prayed with faſting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they be-

lieved." To the ſame purpoſe Paul writes to Titus, "Ordain *elders in every city*, as I had appointed thee," Titus i. 5. This exactly accords with what we read in the epiſtles to the churches, Philip. i. 1. "To all the ſaints who are at Philippi, with the *biſhops* and deacons." Peter writes to the *elders* of the churches, 1 Epiſt. v. 1. James alſo exhorts, chap. v. 14. "Is any ſick among you? let him call for the *elders* of the church." It is true, that the epiſtles of Peter and of James are what are called general epiſtles; but certainly the ſick brother muſt be a member of a particular church, and who can the *elders* be for whom he is to ſend, but thoſe of his own church? It is alſo worthy of remark, that thoſe epiſtles which are called general, muſt become particular, and that every line of them muſt be conſidered as addreſſed to that church in whoſe hands they are. It is then very evident that the primitive church had an elderſhip, or preſbytery, in each church. Indeed we read of no church in the New Teſtament, ſo far as I recollect, ſuppoſed complete, or keeping all the ordinances as delivered to them, but had a plurality of paſtors. To "ſet in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city," are cloſely conjoined by Paul, Titus i. 5. The only paſſage which ſeems to ſpeak another language, is Rev. chap. ii. and iii. But we are certainly to explain theſe paſſages that are dark, by thoſe on the ſame ſubject that are clear and deciſive. We know there

were elders in the church at Ephesus, (Acts xx. 17.) although in the epistle to that church, Rev. ii. 1. we read, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus;" the conclusion then is natural, that by *angel* (which signifies *messenger*) we are either to understand the elders of that church collectively, or each of them individually, as the *messenger* of Christ to their brethren; even as the presiding ruler in the synagogue (though we know there were more rulers than one in each synagogue) was called *Sheliah Zibbor*, that is, the *angel of the church* or *congregation*. See Prideaux's Connexions, vol. ii. p. 399. This conclusion is the more forcible, if we consider that the whole book of Revelation, the epistolary as well as prophetic parts, are written in a figurative manner. Although I by no means think, that the epistles to the seven churches are mystical prophecies of seven distinct periods, from the primitive times of Christianity to the end of the world, yet every body must admit, that these epistles partake, in a considerable degree, of the figurative language of the whole book *. And it would seem to me

* The truth of this remark of Mr Ballantine, is evident from the whole of the seven epistles. Although *angel* in the singular be used in all these epistles, yet from some parts of them it plainly appears, that a plurality of persons are addressed under that name, whether we understand the presbytery or the church at large. Thus, chap. ii. 10. "Behold the devil shall cast some of *you* (ἐξ ὑμῶν) into prison, and *ye* shall have (ἕξετε) tribulation," &c. In like manner, verse 24. "but unto *you*," (ὑμῖν δὲ); and verse 25. "that which *ye* have," (ὃ ἔχετε). It is true,

equally eaſy to build the whole fabric of epiſcopacy on the word *angel*, which is here evidently uſed in a figurative ſenſe, as to ſhew from hence that there was only one paſtor in each of the ſeven churches.

'But as every ordinance of God diſcovers the divine wiſdom in its ſubſerviency to the end deſigned, ſo in the preſent caſe. It is ſurely a rare thing to find one paſtor of a church excelling in every grace and gift, and although he did, the church indeed muſt be few in number, before he could faithfully diſcharge all the paſtoral duties to each of the members. If public preaching be accounted nearly the only duty of the paſtoral office, which, alas! is too generally ſuppoſed and acted on as a principle, through habit and preconceived errors, it is eaſy to ſee how people may imagine that a man with gifts to edification may be paſtor to as many as his voice can reach in one place, in public ſpeaking. But take into view all the duties connected with *overſight* and *rule*, and this corrupt principle is completely overturned. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. Heb. xiii. 7. When a church is ſo numerous (I do not mean a congregation ſimply ſo called, for a paſtor can only have relation to a church of Chriſt) as to render it impoſſible for any one man to perform the paſtoral duties to that church, or, which is much the ſame

that the ſtyle in theſe epiſtles is generally *thou* in the ſingular. This is very common when a collective body is addreſſed, but an individual could not with propriety be addreſſed in the plural.

thing, to have an intimate acquaintance with each of the members, as a *paſtor*, *ruler*, and *guide*, there is great danger of that church falling into confuſion and impurity. It is vain to ſuppoſe that theſe may be prevented by the watchfulneſs and care of members one towards another, as an effectual antidote againſt impurity. It is granted, if members do not act in duty one towards another, the number of paſtors in a church never could ſupply the deficiency, nor preſerve purity; but if God never has ordained the duties of members to each other to be a ſubſtitute for the elderſhip, it is fooliſh for us to think they can be ſo. It is only a ſcheme deviſed by human wiſdom, and can never anſwer the end. If any one ſhould aſk, Why? the anſwer, *God has not ſo ordained*, is quite ſatisfactory to my own mind; but if any inquire further, it might be added, No member of a church, however much he attends to duties towards his brethren, is a paſtor, ruler, and guide to that church, till his brethren chuſe and ordain him to that office. And ſo hath the Lord ordained in all the churches.

'It is alſo reaſonable, as well as ſcriptural, that the number of paſtors in a church ſhould bear proportion to the number of members. A mere plurality of elders would be of little conſequence, unleſs their number and diligence anſwered all the exigencies of the church.

'It may be thought ſome churches are ſo ſmall, that a pluralityof paſtors would be ſuperfluous;

but I am perſuaded, that while even ſuch churches have only one paſtor, there is ſomething wanting among them. Infant churches may indeed be ſo weak in grace and gifts, that a plurality cannot be obtained. If, however, they believe that a preſbytery in a church is the ordinance of God, and that the treaſures of grace and gifts are with Jeſus; and if they add to this every exertion in the exerciſe of grace and gifts, there can be no doubt but the Lord will amply ſupply ſuch churches. "For this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. But unleſs churches believe that a preſbytery is an ordinance of God, and look to him for it, they cannot obtain it *.'

Some have maintained that there is a diſtinction between preaching and ruling elders, and accordingly Preſbyterians have diſtinguiſhed the one by the name of miniſters, and the other by that of elders. The former preach, baptize, and diſpenſe the Lord's ſupper; the latter are members of what is called the ſeſſion. The former are clergymen; the latter laymen, and are uſually called lay-elders. We may ſafely affirm, there is no hint in the New Teſtament of the diſtinction between clergy and laity. This was one of the ſteps of the myſtery of iniquity, by which the man of ſin acquired ſuch power †.

* Ballantine's Obſervations on Confeſſions of Faith, &c. *note*, p 90,—94. 2d edit. Edin. 1804.

† Some ſay the diſtinction is merely nominal; by the former

Dr Campbell, to whoſe Lectures we have had frequent occaſion to refer, ably expoſes the evil and abſurdity of the diſtinction, as well as the means by which it was eſtabliſhed. 'Before ſuch tenets as theſe, ſays he, which favour ſo much of the political views of an aſpiring faction, and ſo little of the liberal ſpirit of the goſpel, could generally obtain, ſeveral cauſes had contributed in preparing the minds of the people. On every occurrence, the paſtors had taken care to improve the reſpect of the lower ranks, by widening the diſtance between their own order and the condition of their Chriſtian brethren; and for this purpoſe had early broached a diſtinction, which, in proceſs of time, univerſally prevailed, of the whole Chriſtian commonwealth into clergy and laity. The terms are derived from two Greek words, κληρος, lot or inheritance, and λαος, people. The plain intention was to ſuggeſt, that the former, the paſtors or clergy, for they appropriated the term κληρος to themſelves, were ſelected and contradiſtinguiſhed from the multitude, as being, in the preſent world, by way of eminence, God's *peculium*, or ſpecial inheritance.

'It is impoſſible to conceive a claim in appearance more arrogant, or in reality worſe founded. God is indeed in the Old Teſtament ſaid to be the inheritance of the Levites, becauſe a determined

is meant thoſe who hold offices in the church. But why then are the deacons, or the *elders* in the Preſbyterian connection, who certainly hold offices, conſidered to be laymen?

ſhare of the ſacrifices and offerings made to God was in part to ſerve them inſtead of an eſtate in land, ſuch as was given to each of the other tribes. But I pray you mark the difference; no where is the tribe of Levi called God's inheritance, though that expreſſion is repeatedly uſed of the whole nation. Concerning the whole Iſraelitiſh nation, Moſes, who was himſelf a Levite, ſays in an addreſs to God, Deut. ix. 29. "They are thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughteſt out by thy mighty power." The words in the ſeptuagint tranſlation deſerve our particular attention. Ουτοι λαος συ και κληρος συ ους εξηγαγες εκ γης Αιγυπτου εν τη ισχυι σου τη μεγαλη. The ſame perſons are, in the ſame ſentence, declared to be both the λαος and the κληρος. What, ſays the canoniſt, at once laymen and clergy? that is certainly abſurd; the characters are incompatible; yet it did not then appear ſo to Moſes. Now, would it be thought reaſonable or juſt, that what was allowed to be the privilege and the glory of every Iſraelite, under the more ſervile eſtabliſhment of Moſes, ſhould, under the more liberal diſpenſation of the goſpel, be diſclaimed by all thoſe diſciples of Jeſus who have not been admitted into the ſacred order, which they, for this reaſon, have called clerical.

'When we recur to the uſe of the term in the New Teſtament, we find one paſſage, and but one, wherein it is applied to perſons. The paſſage is in the firſt epiſtle of Peter, the fifth chapter, and

third verſe, which is thus rendered in our verſion: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being enſamples to the flock." The words in the original are, μηδ' ως κυριευοντες των κληρων, αλλα τυποι γινομενοι τȣ ποιμνιȣ. They are part of a charge given to the preſbyters, or paſtors, relating to their care of the people committed to them, who are called God's flock, which they are commanded to feed, of which they are to take the overſight, not the maſtery, and to which they are to ſerve as patterns. The ſame perſons, therefore, who both in this, and in the preceding verſe, are ſtyled ποιμνιον, the flock, under the directions of God's miniſters, the ſhepherds, are alſo called κληροι, his inheritance, over whom their paſtors are commanded not to domineer. It is ſomewhat extraordinary, that in the choice of diſtinctions, which the church-rulers ſo ſoon ſhewed a diſpoſition to affect, they ſhould have paid almoſt as little attention to the ſtyle, as they did to the ſpirit and meaning of the ſacred books. Let it be obſerved then, in the firſt place, that this diſtinction, ſo far from having a foundation in Scripture, ſtands in direct contradiction, both to the letter and to the ſenſe of that unerring ſtandard. I am not ignorant that ſome expoſitors, jealous for the prieſthood, render the term κληροι here, the church's poſſeſſions. Not to mention that this explication but ill ſuits the context, and annihilates the contraſt between an imperious maſter and an engaging pattern, and ſuppoſeth an aukward ellipſis in the words, allow me to aſk, What were the church's

poſſeſſions in thoſe days? Was ſhe ſo early veſted with lands and hereditaments, for it is to ſuch only that the term κληρος, when denoting property or poſſeſſion, is applied? Or have thoſe interpreters been dreaming of the truly golden age of Pope Gregory the ſeventh, when the patrimonies of ſome metropolitical and patriarchal ſees were indeed like dukedoms and principalities, and the grand hierarch himſelf could diſpoſe of kingdoms and empires? In the apoſtolic times, on the contrary, the church's patrimony conſiſted moſtly, I may ſay, in perſecution and calumny, hatred and deriſion, agreeably to the prediction of her Lord.' ——— 'But to return to the diſtinction of the whole church into clergy and laity; in after ages they even improved upon their predeceſſors. The ſchoolmen (a modeſt race, all clergymen) thought it was doing the laymen too much honour to derive the name from λαος, populus. It ſuited their notions better to deduce it from λαας, lapis, a ſtone. Take for a ſpecimen a few things advanced on this ſubject by ſome celebrated doctors, as quoted by Altensfaig in his Lexicon Theologicum. 'A clergyman ſignifies a learned man, ſcientific, ſkilful, full of knowledge, accompliſhed, and intelligent. A layman, on the contrary, ſignifies an unlearned man, unſkilful, ſilly, and *ſtony*. On this account, the term *laic* or *layman* may be derived from the Greek word λαας, which in Latin is *lapis*, or a ſtone. And ſo every clerk or clergyman, in ſo far as he is a clergyman, is re-

ſpectable; a layman again, ſo far as he is ſuch, is deſpicable. Clergymen alſo are as a body juſtly ſuperior, and ought to have precedency of laymen*.' To theſe I ſhall add the ſentiments of Cardinal Bona, in relation to the care that ought to be taken by the clergy, that laymen may not be allowed to do themſelves harm by ſtudying the profounder parts of Scripture, which their ſtupidity is utterly incapable of comprehending. He kindly mentions, at the ſame time, the books which he thinks they will not be the worſe for, and which, therefore, they may be permitted to peruſe. 'Concerning laymen, in whom pride the mother of blindneſs reigns, ſo far as reſpects thoſe things which regard faith and morals. For when, like idiots, they preſume to explain the ſacred writings, which are the moſt profound of all writings; and again, when they happen to poſſeſs any external accompliſhment, they deſpiſe all others, and being thus doubly blinded by pride, they deſervedly fall into that worſt error through which they are infatuated by God, ſo that they know not how to diſcern what is good and what is evil. Wherefore, let not laymen read all the books of the ſacred Scripture. For as there is

* 'Capitur clericus pro viro docto, ſcientifico, perito, ſcientia pleno, repleto et experto. E contra laicus capitur pro viro indocto, imperito, inſipiente et lapideo. Unde laicus dicitur a λαας; Græce, quod eſt lapis Latine. Et ſic omnis clericus, in quantum clericus, eſt laudabilis; laicus vero, in quantum laicus, eſt vituperandus. Clerici quoque a toto genere de jure præponuntur, et debent præponi laicis.'

nothing so sacred, or salutary, or pious, which hath not chanced to be abused, so hath it fared with books; with respect to which the fault is not in the writers, but the wickedness is in the abuse. They are not, however, to be restrained from moral and devout works, which have no difficulty, or ambiguity, or absurdity in their translation; of which sort are the histories, lives, or legends of the saints, and also sacred meditations *.' How condescending is the good Doctor! He does not absolutely prohibit the stupid and conceited generation of laymen from reading some of the plainer books of Scripture, and indulges them freely in what is better for them, story-books and godly meditations, and the legends of the saints †.'

* 'De laicis in quibus mater cæcitatis superbia regnat, quatenus ad ea quæ sunt fidei et morum. Cum enim sicut idiotæ presumunt sacram scripturam exponere, quæ est profundissima omninm scripturarum. Cum iterum habeant quandam honestatem exteriorem, contemnunt vitam omnium aliorum, et merito hujus duplicis superbiæ excæcantur, ut incidant in errorem istum pessimum, per quem excæcantur a Deo, ut nesciant discernere quid bonum est et quid malum. Quare non omnes scripturæ libros legant laici. Quoniam nihil est tam sanctum et salubre et pium quo non contingat abuti, sic de libris evenit, quorum non est culpa, neque scribentium, sed scœlus est in abusu: non tamen arcendi videntur ab opusculis moralibus et devotis, nullam in se difficultatem, nec ambiguitatem, nec absurditatem in translatione gerentibus, cujusmodi sunt historiæ, vel vitæ, vel legendæ sanctorum, nec non meditationes sanctæ.'

† Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 297, —300. 303,—305. Dr Campbell does not translate these passages; indeed it is impossible to do justice to the original.

While no such distinction then as that of clergy and laity can be admitted as scriptural, it does not follow that there may not be a diversity of gifts among elders, nor that it is improper for each of them peculiarly to apply his mind to, and to be chiefly engaged in, that particular department of duty belonging to the office, for which he is best qualified. One man may be best qualified for labouring in public; another may be his superior in conversation, and may eminently promote the edification of the church by more private admonition and instruction. He may be very prudent and wise, well acquainted with the corruptions of the human heart, possessed of much knowledge of the word of God, well fitted for warning those who are out of the way, and comforting the feeble-minded, skilful in managing the tempers of men, while his gifts for public preaching are not so great *. This is confirmed by the word of God, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17. That by *double honour* here is meant larger temporal support, is evi-

* Dr Franklin, so justly celebrated for his wisdom and genius, seldom or never made a speech in Congress; yet such was the estimation of his judgment and penetration, that his opinion, delivered in a short sentence or two, had generally the greatest weight. Mr Addison had no talents for public speaking. Had these men been members of a church, and excelled as much in the knowledge of divine things as they did in other things, would they not have been eminently qualified for overseeing or feeding the flock of God?

dent, not only from the frequent use of the word τιμη* in this sense, but from the reason of the precept; for, adds the apostle, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer is worthy of his reward," ver. 18. This support is to be bestowed both on those who rule and on those who preach, although more abundantly on the latter.

Some, in order to avoid a distinction between preaching and ruling elders, consider the precept to respect those elders who are laborious in the discharge of their duty; but this implies the absurdity of the church being called to support, in a liberal manner, elders who were not laborious. The meaning of the precept seems obvious, that the elders who faithfully discharge their duty should be liberally provided for, but that this was especially their duty towards those who labour in the word and doctrine. Their gifts were superior, they were calculated for more extensive usefulness, they would require to devote more of their time to study and reading; and preaching the gospel, not merely in the church, but to unbelievers around them, they stood in need of more support from their brethren.

If any from this text infer that the elders who rule well are not *entitled* to preach, they must also maintain that the elders who preach are not entitled to rule; a restriction which has never

* Matt. xxvii. 6. 9. Acts iv. 34. v. 2. 3. vii. 16. xix. 19. xxviii. 10. 1 Cor. vi. 20. &c.

been, and is not likely to be, advanced. We have the cleareſt evidence that all the elders were overſeers of the flock. There was no ſuperiority of office. The gift of one might be greater, but ſtill he was but a fellow-labourer with his brethren in the preſbytery. One might be better qualified for one part of duty, another for another; and theſe gifts were beſtowed to be uſed for the benefit of the whole. This would be beſt promoted by each attending to the particular line of duty which the Lord had pointed out, by the gifts and ſuperior aptitude he had beſtowed.

To endeavour to maintain an equality among the elders, by inſiſting that each ſhould take his turn in the various duties of the office, would have been ſacrificing the edification of the churches to the jealouſy which might ariſe in the minds of the elders. We cannot conceive good men to wiſh, nor the Lord to permit this. The whole of the ſpirit, if not of the letter of the precept, Rom. xii. 6,—8. applies as well to a preſbytery as to a church: "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of our faith; or miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality, (απλοτητι, ſee 2 Cor. viii. 2. ix. 11. 13.); he that ruleth, with diligence; he that ſheweth mercy, with

cheerfulneſs." Here again we have ruling diſtinguiſhed from teaching. The ſame diſtinction is made, 1 Cor. xii. 28. where both teachers and governments are mentioned. All agree that teaching and ruling officially in the church is confined to the elders. It therefore appears that ſome of the elders were chiefly engaged in preaching the word, and others in ruling, becauſe theſe ſeveral gifts had been beſtowed on them.

It is indeed true, that no one can rule in a church who is not (διδακτικος) fit to teach, for it is a rule of inſtruction and perſuaſion, not of force. This, therefore, is an indiſpenſable qualification in an elder, 1 Tim. iii. 2. But there are various ways of teaching. Some excel in gifts for teaching more publicly; others are equally eminent, or more ſo, in a leſs public manner. Neither gift ſhould be loſt to the church. The elder who poſſeſſes the latter, will perhaps be as uſeful in the church as the other.

The right which thoſe who preach the goſpel have to live by the goſpel, is clearly ſtated in Scripture. The apoſtle having quoted the Moſaic precept of not muzzling the ox which treadeth out the corn, ſays, "Does God take care for oxen? or ſaith he it altogether for our ſakes? For our ſakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that plougheth ſhould plough in hope, and that he that threſheth in hope, ſhould be partaker of his hope. If we have ſown unto you ſpiritual things, is it a great thing if we ſhall reap your carnal

things?" 1 Cor. ix. 9,—11. Again, "They which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar; even ſo hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel," ver. 13, 14. The church then who had the ability, without the inclination, to ſupport one or more who ſhould devote their time wholly to the work of the Lord, would, it appears, be highly blameable. The peculiar advantages poſſeſſed by a perſon who gives himſelf wholly to the word of God and prayer, are obvious; but although this is ſtrongly implied in Scripture, the exhortation to the elders of Epheſus to labour with their own hands, as Paul had occaſionally done, Acts xx. 35. removes the objection that ſome churches are prevented, by poverty, from enjoying the benefit of a plurality of elders. If a church be able to maintain their elders, it is their duty to do ſo; but however poor and incapable of this, they may have their biſhops and deacons, as well as the richeſt.

Although women were not ſuffered to ſpeak in the church, 1 Cor. xiv. 34. nor to teach or uſurp authority over the man, 1 Tim. ii. 12. yet it is evident that women were employed in inſtructing their own ſex in private. Had not this been the caſe, there would not have been ſo many mentioned in the Scriptures as labouring in the goſpel. Priſcilla is thus ſpoken of in ſeveral places. She, with her huſband, is ſtyled a helper or fellow-labourer in Chriſt with Paul, Rom.

xvi. 3. In the same chapter, "Salute," says he, "Tryphena and Tryphosa who laboured in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis (Περσιδα την αγαπητην) who laboured much in the Lord." "I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women who laboured with me in the gospel," Phil. iv. 3.

It appears, that where proper persons could be found in the churches of the female sex, they were employed in teaching and watching over their own sex. In 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. the apostle gives directions respecting their qualifications: "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." 'This, and the other good works,' says Dr Macknight, 'mentioned by the apostle, being attended with great expence, the poor widows who desired to be taken into the number cannot be supposed to have performed them at their own charges. I therefore suppose the apostle is speaking of *female deacons*, who had been employed in the offices here mentioned at the common expence; consequently the meaning of the direction will be, that, in choosing *widows*, Timothy was to prefer those who formerly had been employed by the church as deaconesses, and had discharged that

office with faithfulneſs and propriety. For ſince theſe women had ſpent the prime of their life in the laborious offices of love mentioned by the apoſtle, without receiving any recompence but maintenance, it was highly reaſonable, when grown old in that good ſervice, to promote them to an honourable function, which required knowledge and experience, rather than bodily ſtrength, and which was rewarded with a liberal maintenance *.'

The ſame perſons are ſpoken of Titus ii. 3. "The aged women (πρεσβυτιδας, *the female elders*, as ſome render it) likewiſe, that they be in behaviour as becometh holineſs, that they may teach the young women †," &c. We may eaſily ſee how uſeful ſuch perſons were likely to prove, eſpecially when jealouſy rendered the intercourſe of men and women, uſual among us, either difficult or improper. That this office continued in the Chriſtian churches for ſeveral centuries, appears from Epiphanius, Theophylact, Theodoret, and other eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians. See *Suiceri Theſaur.* on the Word, II. p. 289. and *Bingham's Origines Eccleſiaſtic.* Book II. ch. 30. Chryſoſtom (as quoted by Whitby) ſays, that the apoſtle in theſe

* See Macknight on the Epiſtles, *in loc.*

† It is evident that theſe women were in ſome office, for age and character were not neceſſary to entitle a widow to ſupport; this is due to every poor member. This view of theſe directions alſo explains the precept of refuſing the younger widows. The cares of a family would unfit them for this work, and they might even marry heathens, and draw back to perdition.

places ſpeaks *of what becomes the miniſtry*. See Dr Whitby on 1 Tim. iii. 11.

In Acts vi. we have an account of the origin of the office of deacons in the church of Jeruſalem. The church at Philippi alſo had its deacons, Phil. i. 1. and we have the character neceſſary for the office, delineated with the ſame preciſion as that of elder, 1 Tim. iii. To the poor the goſpel is preached. Among them it has been principally ſucceſsful, and every church of Chriſt will have the poor ever with them; this office then muſt always be neceſſary. There were no honorary offices in the churches of Chriſt. The faithful diſcharge of the duties of any office certainly entitles a member to reſpect from his brethren; their deſign, however, was not to raiſe one member above another, but to promote the welfare of the whole body.

As the deacons were appointed to attend to the caſes of the poor, and to diſtribute the alms of the church, their office neceſſarily called them to viſit the members, eſpecially thoſe of the poorer ſort. This alſo would afford them an opportunity of giving ſuitable admonitions, and their character, which is deſcribed to direct the churches in the choice of them, ſhews that they muſt be well qualified for this duty. It is unneceſſary to inſiſt on the advantages which muſt ariſe to a church from perſons conducting themſelves properly in this office, καλῶς διακονησαντες, 1 Tim. iii. 14. The deacons are probably mentioned under the name

of helps, 1 Cor. xii. 28. They were indeed helps to the elders. The chief object of the latter office is the ſpiritual concerns of the members, without however excluding attention to their temporal neceſſities. The great object of the former office is the care of the temporal, but not to the excluſion of ſpiritual concerns.

The deacons in the apoſtolic church were not all of one ſex. Phebe was a deaconeſs of the church of Cenchrea, ουσαν διακονον, Rom. xvi. 1. and we have directions for chuſing them, as well as thoſe of the other ſex, 1 Tim. iii. 2. γυναικας ωσαυτως σεμνας, "In like manner muſt the *women* be grave." This is the proper verſion of the original, and not as we read it, *their* wives *.

It is very common to deem whatever is unuſual to be abſurd, and, to ſome readers, this will probably ſeem ſo. However, to ſhew that the perſuaſion that ſuch an office exiſted is not a novelty, I ſhall quote Dr Macknight's note on the verſe. 'In tranſlating γυναικας,' ſays he, 'by the word *women*, I have followed the Vulgate, which hath here, *Mulieres ſimiliter pudicas*, the women

* γυνη is always tranſlated *woman*, unleſs the connection limits it to a wife. This is not the caſe here. A Proteſtant tranſlator, in his zeal againſt the Romiſh celibacy, tranſlated Acts i. 14. "Theſe all continued in prayer and ſupplication with *their wives*." His tranſlation, and the common one of this paſſage, are of equal authority. Archbiſhop Newcome renders it in his tranſlation, *the female deaconeſſes*, as alſo in Rom. xvi. 1.

in like manner muſt be modeſt; becauſe I ſee no reaſon for its being made a qualification of deacons to have wives *vigilant and faithful in all things;* eſpecially as it is not made a qualification of biſhops to have wives of that character. Beſides, Chryſoſtom, and the Greek commentators, with the moſt ancient Latin fathers, were of opinion that the apoſtle, in this paſſage, is ſpeaking both of thoſe women who in the firſt age were employed in miniſtering to the afflicted, and of thoſe who were appointed to teach the young of their own ſex the principles of religion. As the manners of the Greeks did not permit men to have much intercourſe with women of character, unleſs they were their relations, and as the Aſiatics were ſtill under greater reſtraints, it was proper that an order of female teachers ſhould be inſtituted in the church for inſtructing the young of their own ſex. Of theſe, I think, the apoſtle writes in his epiſtle to Titus, ch. ii. 3, 4. where he gives an account of their office, and calls them, Πρεσβυτιδας, *female elders,* becauſe of their age. And it is believed that they are the perſons called *widows*, of whoſe maintenance by the church the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Tim. v. 2. and whoſe character and ſtate he there deſcribes, ver. 9, 10. Farther, Clement of Alexandria reckons widows among eccleſiaſtical perſons, Pædag. Lib iii. cap. 12. 'There are many precepts in Scripture concerning thoſe who are choſen, ſome for prieſts, others for biſhops, others for deacons, others for

widows.' Grotius tells us, these female presbyters or elders were ordained by the imposition of hands, till the council of Laodicea; and for this he quotes the eleventh canon of that council. From what is said of Euodias and Syntyche, Philip. iv. 2. it is probable they were female presbyters. Perhaps also Priscilla, Tryphæna, and Tryphosa, were of the same order, with some others, whom in his epistle to the Romans he salutes, Rom. xvi. 3. 12. as labouring in the Lord.

'For these reasons, I think the apostle in 1 Tim. iii. 11. describes the qualifications not of the deacons wives, but of the women who in the first age were employed by the church to minister to the sick and afflicted, and to instruct the young of their own sex in the principles of the Christian faith.'

The Doctor's note on Romans xvi. 1. is to the same purpose. 'Cornelius Nepos, in the preface to his history, speaking of the manners of the Greeks, informs us, that it was not customary with them to have free access to the company of women of virtue, unless they were their relations. His words are, 'Many things are esteemed proper amongst us, which appear shameful amongst them. What Roman is ever ashamed to introduce his wife to a feast? or what mistress of a family does not sit at the head of the table, and entertain the company? But in Greece it is very different; for there a woman is not admitted to an entertainment, unless the company consist only

of relations of the family. They alſo ſit in a retired part of the houſe, which is called Γυναικωνιτις, into which only near relations are admitted*.' In Aſia, the female ſex were under ſtill greater reſtraints. Wherefore, as the Chriſtian religion was firſt ſpread in Aſia and Greece, it is evident that ſuch of the female ſex as needed other inſtruction beſides what was given in the public aſſemblies, muſt have received it in private from ſome of their own ſex who were appointed to teach them. Accordingly we learn from the New Teſtament, and from the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers, that even in the apoſtles' days, ſome women remarkable for their knowledge, prudence and piety, and of a fit age, were choſen to inſtruct the newly converted and the young of their own ſex, and to exhort the ſick and comfort the afflicted, who could not attend the public miniſtrations. Theſe female teachers are mentioned under the appellation of *widows*, 1 Tim. v. 3. where alſo, ver. 9. their *character* and *election* are deſcribed. Farther, as the firſt Chriſtians were remarkable for their love to each other, they appointed in every church men to whom they gave

* ' Pleraque noſtris moribus ſunt decora, quæ apud illos turpia putantur. Quem enim Romanorum, pudet uxorem ducere in convivium? aut cujus mater familias, non primum locum tenet ædium, atque in celebritate verſatur? quod multo ſit aliter in Græcia. Nam neque in convivium adhibetur, niſi propinquorum: neque ſedet, niſi in interiore parte ædium, quæ Γυναικωνιτις, *gynæconitis* adpellatur, quo nemo accedit, niſi propinqua cognatione conjungitur.'

the appellation of deacons, whose office it was to make collections for the poor, and to apply these collections in relieving widows and orphans who were destitute, the sick also, and the imprisoned for their religion, whom they visited and comforted with the greatest tenderness. In like manner, they appointed women whom they named deaconesses, to perform the same offices to the distressed of their own sex, and whom for that purpose, they supplied with money out of the church's funds. The character and office of these female deacons the apostle has described, 1 Tim. v. 9., and, verse 10. orders the widows, or female presbyters, to be chosen from among them. The deaconess is also described, 1 Tim. iii. 11. and in the apostolical constitutions, lib. iii. cap. 15. Προχειρισαι δε και διακονον πιστην, και ἁγιαν, εις τας των γυναικων ὑπηρεσιας. "Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministries towards the women." Ignatius likewise in his epistle ad Antiochens, No. xii. thus writes, "I salute, τας εν Χριστω διακονους, the deaconesses in Christ." Pliny too, in his famous letter to the emperor Trajan, mentions them; for he told him, that in order to get certain information concerning the Christians, he had put two maid servants to the torture, who were called among the Christians *ministræ*, that is, *deaconesses*, expecting no doubt that, as they were of the weaker sex, and held an office in the church, they would be constrained to discover the secrets of their religion. His words are, 'On

which account, I judged it the more neceſſary to endeavour to aſcertain the truth by tormenting two handmaids, who were called *ſervants* *.' The office of female deacon being of ſuch early inſtitution, and of ſuch utility, it is probable Phæbe held that office in the church of Cenchreæ. For ſhe is not only called διακονον, *a deaconeſs*, but ſhe is ſaid to have performed the offices of a deaconeſs, ver. 2. "She hath been a helper of many, and of myſelf alſo;" at leaſt Origen and Chryſoſtom underſtood the apoſtle as ſpeaking of a female deacon in this paſſage †.'

Section II.

We have ſeen that the apoſtolic churches had always, when fully ſet in order, a plurality of elders, or a preſbytery. This, as other recorded examples, the churches are certainly bound to follow in every age, and indeed, if we conſider the importance of the office, it will appear that one man is inadequate to its duties. Theſe are ſo numerous, and the neceſſary gifts ſo various, that we cannot expect to find them in, or properly performed by one man. Beſides, a ſingle elder is

* Quo magis neceſſarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ Miniſtræ dicebantur, quid eſſet veri, et per tormenta quærere.

† See Macknight on the Epiſt. *in loc.* See alſo Scott, Guiſe, Doddridge, Grotius, Hammond, Le Clerc and Whitby, on 1 Tim. v. who all underſtand the paſſage in this ſenſe.

under great temptation, either to become ſelf-willed, and to endeavour to rule according to his own pleaſure, from having no equals in the church; or, on the other hand, there is a danger leſt he be deſpiſed, and his opinion, being conſidered only that of an individual, not to be regarded ſo much as it ought. He will alſo be very apt to fall into a careleſs, ſlovenly way of carrying on the buſineſs of the church. This is almoſt the certain conſequence of any perſon having too much to do. Beſides, where there is but one elder, if he die or leave the church, they are in an imperfect ſtate, and without any ruler until another be choſen.

Under a conſciouſneſs of his proneneſs to err, a ſingle elder cannot but be diſpoſed, on ſome occaſions, to conſult thoſe on whoſe judgment he moſt relies. Through the corruption of human nature, this is apt to excite jealouſy in a church, and to make the members conſider themſelves as in part ruled by thoſe who are not in office. Every cauſe or occaſion of jealouſy in a church ſhould, as much as poſſible, be prevented. Now there is leſs danger of jealouſy being excited by a preſbytery, than by perſons not in office. Beſides, we have more reaſon to expect that the Lord will guide thoſe whom he ſets over a church, when conſulting about its affairs. If there be only one elder, and if he does not conſult ſome of the brethren on any difficult caſe which may come before the church, he may fall into an error, and be the

occaſion of much ſin; but in a multitude of counſellors there is ſafety.

Beſides the example of the firſt churches, there are alſo important reaſons for each church having a plurality of deacons as well as elders. It would be improper that an individual ſhould have the charge of money matters. This might give birth to very unjuſt ſuſpicions. The number of elders or deacons is not mentioned, unleſs in the caſe of the ſeven at Jeruſalem. We muſt act reſpecting this according to circumſtances. A large church requires more than a ſmall one. We are not prevented from exerciſing our judgment in the management of the churches; only we muſt beware leſt our notions of fitneſs and expediency ſet aſide any ordinance of Jeſus, however minute it may appear.

In the rule or overſight of the church it is evident, unleſs it be very ſmall, one man can do but little. The ordinary walk and converſation of the members cannot be ſo well known, as when ſeveral conſider this to be their peculiar care. We have ſeen, that although thoſe who preach the goſpel have a right to live by the goſpel, the churches are not, in all caſes, burdened with the ſupport of their paſtors. If, indeed, their circumſtances admit of it, and they neglect it, they diſregard the appointment of Chriſt, who commands that thoſe who are taught communicate to their teachers in all good things. It is by no means, however, abſolutely neceſſary that all, or even

that any one of the elders ſhould leave their worldly employments, unleſs the concerns of the church render it neceſſary, and they be able to provide for them. When paſtors of Chriſtian churches lay aſide ſecular buſineſs, this ought not to be for the ſake of obtaining worldly reſpectability, but becauſe their attending to this, and to their paſtoral duties, is apt to interfere. The elders of Epheſus were exhorted to labour with their hands, not merely for their own ſupport, but that they might be able to relieve others.

It is of much importance that the elders ſhould uſe their ſeveral gifts for the edification of the church; that thoſe who chiefly excel in public preaching ſhould thus be employed, while their brethren in the preſbytery are attending to that for which they are beſt qualified. This is completely according to the ſpirit, and in no degree oppoſite to the letter of Scripture. The elders are all equals in office, but an equality of gifts among them is not to be expected. Where the elders and the church are of a proper temper, there will be no diſputing on this head.

To require a conſiderable meaſure of gifts for public ſpeaking, as eſſential to an elder, muſt preclude the exiſtence of a preſbytery in moſt, at leaſt in many churches. As to public preaching, the number of the church is of no conſequence. It is as eaſy to preach to five hundred as to fifty. The gifts of ſome are at once calculated to attract the attention of the careleſs, and to edify believers.

In this country, the members of the church often form a ſmall proportion of the aſſembly on the Lord's day. Ought we not to ſtudy to promote the glory of Chriſt in their converſion and inſtruction? Are not all things to be done to edification *? Is it neceſſary that, becauſe the church requires ſeveral elders, they ſhould, *in their turn*, conduct the public ſervice? Where this has been the caſe, what has been the conſequence in ſome churches? few, beſides the church, have attended, and an apparent diſregard about the converſion of ſinners, and a diſuſe or neglect of the means by which it is effected, have taken place, to the great injury of the power of religion, even in the members of the church.

Every church ought diligently to ſeek after the converſion of others, and to cauſe the goſpel to ſound out from them. If a church grow indifferent about thoſe who are without, it is a proof that religion does not flouriſh within †.

* This is a general rule, provided we never employ it to ſet aſide or add to the ordinances of Chriſt.

† We know that the apoſtles remained in Jeruſalem after elders were ordained. However well qualified theſe elders were, we cannot ſuppoſe them equal to the apoſtles in gifts for edifying the church, or for alarming the careleſs. In this caſe we may well ſuppoſe the apoſtles would generally preach in public, eſpecially when unbelievers were preſent; and yet the elders had much to attend to, in overſeeing the brethren, and inſtructing them in private. Now, though the apoſtles have no ſucceſſors as ſuch, and the elders are all equal, can there be any impropriety in each uſing his peculiar gifts for the glory of Chriſt? Nay,

The ſtate of our own country is peculiarly favourable, in ſome reſpects, for ſpreading the goſpel. Amidſt many evils attending that indiſcriminate profeſſion which is ſo general, there is one advantage. Many come to hear the goſpel, and ſuch ſhould ever be encouraged, by the beſt accommodations in our power, to be preſent at the meetings of the churches of the ſaints; nor ſhould any thing be omitted to attract their attention, unleſs it miſrepreſent or corrupt the goſpel, or the inſtitutions of Chriſt. No ſtumbling-block ſhould be put in the way of Jew or Gentile, or of the church of God. Paſtors and churches ſhould beware leſt the miniſtry of reconciliation be blamed for their faults, errors, or weakneſſes.

It ſeems very deſirable that there ſhould be at leaſt one paſtor in every church, whoſe time ſhall be wholly devoted to the work of the miniſtry, who ſhall give himſelf wholly to reading, meditation, and prayer, 1 Tim. iv. 15. A paſtor ſupported by the church that he may be thus employed, is nowiſe ſuperior to his brethren in the elderſhip; but if his gifts, or education, or his ſtudies, fit him not only to edify the church, but peculiarly qualify him to affect the careleſs, ought not theſe to be employed as his ſtrength will permit?

It is true, the apoſtle ſuppoſes that an unbeliever may come in when the brethren were ex-

are they not bound to do it, unleſs Scripture has ſaid that each elder is to attend exactly to the ſame thing?

horting one another, and be convinced and converted, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. 25. and no doubt God may, and does bleſs the exhortations of the brethren; but experience proves what we muſt reaſonably expect, that where means are not uſed to draw the attention of the careleſs, few attend, and comparatively little good is done. Indeed the apparent indifference of ſome churches, and their neglect in uſing proper means for the converſion of ſinners, has prejudiced many of God's people altogether againſt ſcriptural churches; giving too much reaſon for the charge, that their numbers have been kept up by Chriſtians leaving other ſocieties, while few have been brought to a knowledge of the truth amongſt themſelves. Surely, there muſt have been utterly a fault in their ſyſtem, or God would have countenanced his own ordinances, not only for the edification of believers, but for the converſion of ſinners. We are by no means, however, to exclude mutual exhortation in the churches. This is enjoined by the Lord, and anſwers many important purpoſes.

It is objected to elders being engaged in ſecular buſineſs, that they have not time for ſtudying the Scriptures ſo as to teach others; but if a man's mind be ſpiritual, if he meditate day and night on the law of God, he will, through the grace of Chriſt, be fitted for inſtructing his brethren, provided he has ſuitable gifts for the work. Whether the elders of the church of Epheſus had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,

we cannot tell. It is probable that they had. But extraordinary gifts did not preclude the neceſſity of ſtudy, for it is enjoined upon Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14. who was poſſeſſed of theſe. A man may redeem time for ſtudy, particularly in ſome kinds of buſineſs; but when circumſtances admit of it, let him, by all means, give himſelf wholly to theſe things, that his profiting may appear to all.

When the Waldenſes and Albigenſes were reproached by the church of Rome on account of their paſtors being engaged in ſecular buſineſs, they replied, this was from neceſſity, not choice. They were too poor to ſupport their paſtors, but they did not conſider this to be a ſufficient reaſon for neglecting the ordinances of Chriſt, or for remaining in an antichriſtian church.

The elders muſt watch as thoſe who are to give account, endeavouring, by every means in their power, to promote the power of religion in the members, by public and private exhortation and admonition from houſe to houſe. They muſt viſit the ſick, and obſerve that the poor are properly taken care of; for they are overſeers of the whole flock, whether deacons or others. They muſt manifeſt in their own lives, the power of the doctrines which they teach, being examples to the believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity, bearing the infirmities of the weak, and lifting up the hands which hang down. They

muſt particularly attend to any impropriety of conduct, or any erroneous opinions in any member of the church, and act according to the laws of Chriſt, without partiality. They are to preſide in, and to rule over the church, and the brethren are required to ſubmit themſelves. Here a queſtion may ariſe reſpecting the extent of their authority. On the one hand, they are not to be lords over God's heritage; on the other, they muſt let no man deſpiſe them, but rebuke with all authority, Titus ii. 15. How far then, it may be aſked, are the members bound to ſubmit?

This queſtion could not be anſwered were there not laws laid down in Scripture, in all reſpects ſufficient for the government of the churches. But this being admitted, there is no greater difficulty in replying to it, than in aſcertaining the power of a magiſtrate under a well regulated government, or the authority of a judge when preſiding at a trial by jury. The magiſtrate is appointed to carry the laws of the country into effect; he has no power to *make* laws. The ſame holds with reſpect to the paſtors of a church. There are certain laws by which they are to rule; if they be unacquainted with theſe laws, or not qualified to apply them, they are unfit for the office. They cannot require the church, or any individual member, to ſubmit, unleſs they can ſhew that the authority of Chriſt enjoins ſubmiſſion in that particular caſe.

But although the office of the magiſtrate and of

the paſtor thus far agree, they, in ſome reſpects, materially differ. It is abſolutely neceſſary that civil government ſhould be maintained. Although a magiſtrate is liable to be afterwards called to account for an illegal exerciſe of power, he muſt, in the mean time, be ſubmitted to. Hence, if any one under his juriſdiction refuſed to obey his orders, ſuch a perſon would be liable to immediate impriſonment, or to ſome other puniſhment. This may be an inconvenience attending the adminiſtration of human affairs, but it is unavoidable. There would be an end of all authority, if a man might refuſe to ſubmit whenever he choſe to allege that the authority of the magiſtrate was not ſupported by the laws.

But the end of all Chriſt's laws is to promote real religion. This muſt be a reaſonable and willing ſervice, and does not admit of coercion. The paſtor muſt rule only by perſuaſion. By explaining and inculcating the laws of Chriſt, he is to commend himſelf to every man's conſcience. He muſt neither require nor accept of obedience to himſelf. The obedience he demands muſt be for the King of Sion. Even the apoſtles, though really infallible in delivering the laws of Chriſt, were not lords over God's heritage *. They pro-

* Chriſt clearly pointed out to his diſciples the difference of the government any of them were to exerciſe, from that exerciſed by civil magiſtrates. "The kings of the Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them, and they that exerciſe authority upon them are called benefactors; but ye ſhall not be ſo," &c. Luke xxii.

ved their apoſtolical authority by ſigns, and wonders, and mighty deeds, 2 Cor. xii. 12.; but they diſclaimed the idea of having dominion over their brethren, and hence we find them exerciſing the utmoſt patience, even avoiding viſiting the churches until they had uſed every argument to rectify abuſes, and given time for theſe arguments to have their full effect.

This could not take place in civil government. However diſpoſed magiſtrates may be to mercy, they muſt without delay puniſh the diſobedient for the ſafety of the ſtate. But the power of Jeſus is too great, and his government too ſtrong to be ſhaken. If any are not reclaimed by exhortation and forbearance, their foot ſhall ſlide in due time, and in the mean time he will make the wrath of man to praiſe him.

It ſurely then becomes paſtors to be jealous leſt the people ſubmit to them inſtead of ſubmitting to Chriſt. He is the moſt faithful paſtor who has leaſt deſire for undue perſonal influence, and who ſtrives moſt earneſtly to promote implicit ſubjection to the laws of Chriſt. This can only be attained by inſtructing the people, and by not ſhunning to declare the whole counſel of God. However wiſe and pious a paſtor may be, however well he may know what the church ought to do in any ſitua-

25, 26. He is not here ſpeaking of tyrannical governors, but of thoſe who were eſteemed benefactors, and ſo called, as Ptolemy Euergetes, (i. e. benefactor) by their ſubjects: but the authority of the apoſtles was to be completely of a different nature.

tion, he ought not to wish the people to walk by his light. A temporary peace may be maintained, or rather, silence may be observed in a church by their implicitly following the opinion of a pastor or a presbytery; but such peace is always deceitful, and does not rest on a solid foundation. When the members of a church are well instructed; when every act of the church is an act of obedience to Christ; although matters may go on more slowly, and much forbearance may be necessary on all sides, yet greater progress will be made, and there will be less danger of falling into, and persisting in specious errors. The wisest man may err, and I suppose there is no pastor who has been in the habit of hearing the members of a church deliver their opinions on the cases of discipline which have occurred, without receiving instruction from them.

It is of much importance to understand the nature of the subjection to the pastors of a church, enjoined by Christ. From not understanding this subject, many offences have arisen in churches. A pastor, on the one hand, is persuaded that he is to rule; on the other hand, the people know that he is not to exercise lordship; and mutual jealousies arise. He thinks he is only contending for the power committed to him, which is necessary for the good of the church. They think they are maintaining their rights, resisting encroachments which may prove very hurtful, and standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has

made them free. He may have witneſſed much confuſion, ſtrife, and debate, from the want of paſtoral authority, and therefore be more jealous of loſing his; while they, knowing what prieſt-craft has been exerciſed by men calling themſelves miniſters of Chriſt, may be afraid of becoming the ſervants of men.

But when it is clearly underſtood that a paſtor is only to carry into execution the laws of Chriſt, and that with the conſent and in the preſence of the church, all grounds of jealouſy are removed. He has leſs temptation to want of forbearance, and they have ample ſecurity againſt gradual encroachment. Should it be thought that this leaves the churches without a government ſufficiently effective for the preſervation of peace amongſt them, we can only anſwer, *No other government is warranted by Scripture;* and we have no right to lay on the churches any other burden than Chriſt has laid. Beſides, his kingdom is purely ſpiritual; he reigns in the hearts of his people, and no coercive or penal laws are ſuited to promote his deſign. This is perfectly conſiſtent with the paſtors of a church receiving due reſpect from their brethren. They are over them in the Lord, appointed by his authority, and they muſt acknowledge them as their lawful rulers, and eſteem them very highly in love for their work's ſake.

As the edification of the church depends, in a great meaſure, on the piety, ability and faithfulneſs

of elders, the members ought to bear them much on their hearts before the Lord, that like workmen who need not be aſhamed, they may rightly divide the word of God; that their conduct and converſation may be holy and exemplary; and, that they may be directed in all which concerns the church. There ought alſo to be a degree of deference entertained for their judgment, for if they are (as they ought to be) beſt qualified for edifying their brethren, doubtleſs their judgment on any ſubject deſerves peculiar conſideration. Beſides the qualifications which pointed them out to their brethren, as fit objects of their choice to the paſtoral office, the office itſelf being the inſtitution of Chriſt, there is reaſon to expect, on this account, that, through the prayers of their brethren, they ſhall have wiſdom to go out and in before the people; and this conſideration ought to produce a ſpirit of ſubmiſſion to them.

This ſpirit indeed ought alſo to be cheriſhed amongſt the members, one towards another. "All of you be ſubject one to another, and be cloth-ed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. Each ſhould eſteem others better than themſelves, and not be wiſe in their own conceit. It ought peculiarly to be cheriſhed towards thoſe who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by devotedneſs to God. "Ye know," ſays Paul, "the houſe of Stephanas, that it is the firſt fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themſelves to the miniſtry of the ſaints, that ye ſubmit yourſelves unto ſuch, and to every

one that helpeth with us and laboureth," 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. This ſpirit of ſubjection to the elders, and to one another, is perfectly conſiſtent with the church not being the ſervants of men, and where this ſpirit does not ſubſiſt, religion muſt be at a low ebb.

Should an elder act improperly, it is the duty of the church to admoniſh him. This we find expreſsly commanded in Scripture: "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the miniſtry which thou haſt received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it," Col. iv. 17. By becoming an elder, a man is not raiſed above the laws of Chriſt, and the precept, Matt. xviii. 15, 16. is equally applicable to elders as to any others.

The deacons ought alſo to be highly reſpected in the church. They devote a portion of their time to the care of the poor, and to other good works, and their characters are ſuch as entitle them to much conſideration. Their office gives them no authority to rule * in the church, but as they are peculiarly engaged in the Lord's work, they are entitled to ſpecial regard.

Beſides the ſupport of the poor, various expences are incurred by a church. The ſupport

* Attempts have been made to ſupply the want of a preſbytery, by the deacons acting in ſome reſpects as elders; but this is unſcriptural and diſorderly. The duties of every office are clearly pointed out in the word of God, and where that word in all its parts is attended to, there will be no need of any interference.

of the elders, the bread and wine for the Lord's ſupper, &c. All theſe come within the province of the deacons, and therefore they muſt be men of irreproachable character, poſſeſſing the full confidence of their brethren.

Great care is neceſſary in the choice of paſtors and deacons. This, and every thing elſe in a church, ought to be done with much prayer to Jeſus for direction, and none are to be choſen but thoſe who have given proof of their fidelity and ability *.

Although the ſame jealouſy or ſecluſion of females does not prevail with us as it did formerly, and ſtill does in Aſia, yet the importance and propriety of ſuch aged women as thoſe mentioned 1 Tim. v. for watching over and inſtructing their own ſex, are by no means ſuperſeded. Where there are widows anſwering the deſcription there given, thus employed, they muſt prove eminently uſeful. It gives leſs offence to the world to ſee women converſing with their own ſex, and they are better calculated to be uſeful to them. The united brethren commonly called Moravians, have long employed females in this way, and have found great benefit ariſing from it.

Proper deaconeſſes may be procured in al-

* The apoſtle, ſpeaking of the deacons, ſays, "Let theſe alſo firſt be proved." The elder muſt not be a novice, or a new convert, (νεόφυτος) but muſt have given proof of his fitneſs for the work. This was neceſſary alſo in the deacons. How little regarded is either of theſe precepts!

moſt every church. It is as evident that this office exiſted in the apoſtolic churches as that of the deacon. It is evident how uſeful they may be amongſt the female members. They know better what women ſtand in need of when ſick, they can inquire more minutely into their circumſtances, and, by making known and relieving the wants of the members, they connect the church more cloſely, and thereby increaſe love, and promote all the ends of fellowſhip.

Theſe offices ought certainly to be revived and adopted in Chriſtian churches, and, like every other divine ordinance, we ſhall find them profitable. The world, while wearing a form of godlineſs, may laugh; but are they our maſters? All ſpiritual things are fooliſhneſs to them. Cuſtom alone prevents them from ridiculing other ordinances. Had baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper fallen into diſuſe, what a fund of entertainment would they have had by ſeeing them obſerved for the firſt time! Let us not be afraid of the reproach of the croſs.

But women it is ſaid may attend to their own ſex, they may teach and inſtruct them, or viſit the ſick, without being officially employed. True; and it is alſo the duty of every member to look after poor brethren, and to watch over them in love; but the Lord has ſeen good to appoint that certain offices ſhould ſubſiſt in his church for theſe purpoſes, while he has enjoined all to aſſiſt in the work, as far as they are able.

We see that the apostolic churches had deaconesses and female teachers. We may be sure they were very useful; and if we follow the directions left for making a proper choice, we shall doubtless experience the good effects of it. But let us always imitate the apostolic churches, not only in their offices, but in the manner in which they obtained them. When a church was gathered, the apostles did not ordain elders and deacons immediately. They gave them time to become acquainted with the endowments of the members, and to observe whom the Lord pointed out for the work. A church might be some time without elders, nor were they to be chosen till the Lord bestowed some measure of the necessary gifts. "If any be blameless," says Paul, "the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly," &c. &c. Titus i. 6. This reminded the churches of their dependence on Christ, it would excite them to prayer, and would cause them with much joy to receive those persons whom he qualified, without whom they had been incomplete. In like manner let us press forward; let us never be satisfied, nor give the Lord any rest, till we come behind in no gift, and enjoy all the advantages of his institutions.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF ORDINATION.

We have already noticed the unſcriptural and pernicious diſtinction which has prevailed between clergy and laity. To preſerve this diſtinction, the term *ordination*, frequently uſed in Scripture, has been much miſapplied. In the word of God, *to ordain* means in general to appoint. We find in the New Teſtament it was common to lay hands on a perſon appointed to a particular office or work. This was probably derived from the Old Teſtament. Moſes laid his hand on Joſhua, his ſucceſſor. Laying on of hands was not however confined to appointing to an office. It was obſerved alſo in healing the ſick, Acts xxviii. 8. and in communicating the Holy Ghoſt by the apoſtles *.

When Paul and Barnabas were ſent by the

* It ſhould ſeem that laying on hands was an ancient practice, not only among the Hebrews, but alſo in Greece, when bleſſings were pronounced, or prayers offered reſpecting the perſons on whom hands were laid. Xenophon ſays that Abradates, θιγων αυτης της κεφαλης, touching or laying his hands on the head of Panthea, his wife, and looking up to heaven, prayed, 'O great Jupiter, grant me to appear worthy of ſuch a wife, and of ſuch a friend as Cyrus.' Cyri Inſtitut. edit. Hutchinſon, Lond. 8vo. 1765. p. 360.

Holy Ghoſt to the Gentiles, the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch laid hands on them, thus ſolemnly ſeparating or ſetting them apart for the work, Acts xiii. 3. &c. This was not ordination in the ſenſe in which that word is now commonly uſed, [redacted] nor a rite whereby the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were communicated. Paul had been filled with the Holy Ghoſt long before, Acts ix. 17. and there was no other apoſtle, properly ſo called, with the church. From the time of his converſion, he had been engaged in preaching the goſpel, Acts ix. 22. 29. xi. 26. Gal. i. 17. and previous to the laying on of hands, he is reckoned among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch, Acts xiii. 1. This then was merely a ſolemn deſignation to a particular work which they fulfilled, Acts xiv. 26. When the deacons were appointed, the apoſtles prayed and laid hands on them, Acts vi. 6. thus ordaining or appointing them to the office *. We have no expreſs example for laying hands on the elders, but there is no doubt that it was practiſed. The apoſtle directs Timothy to lay hands ſuddenly on no man, 1 Tim. v. 22. and as he had juſt been ſpeaking of elders, it is plain he is alluding to their appointment.

There is certainly no good reaſon why, in the churches of the ſaints in our days, we ſhould ordain

* The laying on of hands was not, it would appear, to communicate the Holy Ghoſt. The deacons were to be men previouſly full of the Holy Ghoſt, Acts vi. 3.

elders by laying on of hands, and not ordain deacons in the same way. Laying hands on one, and not on the other, fosters the common prejudice that elders are *ordained men*, and deacons not so; whereas, in fact, there is no difference between them, except in the offices to which they are appointed.

Some would set aside laying on of hands altogether, as being connected with the communication of the Holy Ghost; but this was only communicated by the laying on of the *apostles'* hands. Yet the presbytery laid hands on Timothy *. It is evident that laying on of hands was used in separating men to the ministry in the primitive apostolic churches. It was not confined to occasions on which the Holy Ghost was conferred. It was used in ordaining elders and deacons, who required only the ordinary gifts. There is nothing in the word of God setting aside this usage.

* His charge was committed to him according to the prophecies that went before of him, 1 Tim. i. 18. Hence the gift is said to be bestowed on him by prophecy, ch. iv. 14. Paul laid his hands on him, and communicated to him the gift necessary for the work in which he was to be engaged, 2 Tim. i. 6. and he was besides set apart to his office by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14. It is not said that the gift of the Spirit was conferred on him διὰ *by* or *through* the instrumentality of the laying on the hands of the presbytery, as he affirms was the case in laying his own hands on him, 2 Tim. i. 6. but it was given him by prophecy, μετὰ, with the laying on the hands of the presbytery. The imposition of their hands in setting him apart to the ministry, accompanied, or was added to the imposition of the apostle Paul's hands whereby he received the gift.

It ought therefore to be obſerved, where this can be done, according to the example given us in Scripture.

'Laying on of hands appears a ſolemn and proper mode of deſignation. The act itſelf may be indifferent, ſo is kneeling in prayer; but there are many bodily acts which, from cuſtom, obtain a ſignificant meaning, and it ſeems improper to change them when ſanctioned by the word of God. The laying on of hands with prayer, is a ſcripture uſage in the caſe of bleſſing and of devoting, or ſetting things or perſons apart to any ſervice or work of God to which he appoints or calls them, and can therefore be uſed after revelation is perfected, and after the extraordinary gifts and ſigns are ceaſed. But it is wholly without foundation in Scripture, to make the being of church officers, or of a Chriſtian church, to depend upon ſuch a declarative ceremony. All that can be ſaid of ſuch an uſage is, that it ought not to be neglected where it can be done, as we ought to pray ſtanding, or kneeling, or proſtrate on the ground, and lifting up our hands; but it would be odd to ſay that a Chriſtian cannot, and muſt not pray at all, when he is not able to put himſelf in ſuch poſtures *.'

Ordination is at this day conſidered by many as conferring an indelible character †. Although,

* Glaſ.

† Wickliffe rejected this indelibility. *Vide* Dial. lib. IV. cap. xv. 1525.

ſay they, a man may preach without being ordained, he muſt not baptize nor adminiſter the Lord's ſupper; but afterwards, he is not only entitled to do ſo in his own, but in any other church. To ſay nothing of the impropriety of conſidering the diſpenſation of the ordinances of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper as ſuperior to the preaching of the word, which plainly reverſes the ſcriptural order, if it be improper for a man who is unordained to adminiſter theſe ordinances in a church, it is equally ſo for a man ordained over one church, to adminiſter them in another. A man who is ordained an elder, receives no office except that of an overſeer in a particular church; juſt as one who is appointed a magiſtrate in one city, has thereby no juriſdiction in another. When a man who has been ordained gives up his charge, one would ſuppoſe he muſt return to his former private ſtation; but this is not generally deemed proper. An unknown ſomething has been communicated to him, of which he cannot be deprived without what is called depoſition. 'The ſteps I have already mentioned and explained,' ſays Dr Campbell, 'advancing from preſbytery to parochial epiſcopacy, thence to prelacy or dioceſan epiſcopacy, from that to metropolitical primacy, and thence again to patriarchal ſuperintendancy, together with thoſe methods I have pointed out to you, whereby the miniſters of religion diſtinguiſhed themſelves from their Chriſtian brethren, inſenſibly prepared the minds of the people for the notion, that in or-

dination there was something exceedingly myſterious, and even inſcrutable. It came at length not to be conſidered as a ſolemn manner of appointing a fit perſon to diſcharge the duties of the paſtoral office amongſt a particular flock or congregation, and of committing them to his care, but to be regarded more eſpecially as the imprinting of a certain character, or unperceivable and incomprehenſible ſignature on a perſon, a character which, though, in conſequence of human means employed by the proper miniſter, it was conferred, could by no power leſs than omnipotence be removed. And though at firſt hearing one would be apt to imagine, that by this tenet they derogated as much from the eccleſiaſtic power on one hand, as they enhanced it on the other, ſince they maintained that the perſons who gave this character could not take it away, the effect on mens' conceptions was very different. If a ſingle ceremony, or form of words, could with as much facility withdraw as confer a gift in its nature inviſible, nobody would be impreſſed with the conception, that any thing very wonderful had been either given or taken. The words or ceremony of ordaining would be conſidered as nothing more than the eſtabliſhed mode of inveſting a man with the right of exerciſing canonically the ſacred function; and the words or ceremony uſed in the depoſition, as the mode of ſtripping him of that right or privilege, ſo that he ſhould no longer be entitled to exerciſe it. In this way he would be

under the ſame canonical incapacity he lay under before his ordination, which anſwers to what was for many ages called in the church, reducing a clergyman to lay-communion. There would be nothing more extraordinary here, than the creating of a lord high ſteward, for inſtance, by certain ſolemnities accompanying the delivery of a white baton into his hands, and placing him on an eminent ſeat, and his putting an end to his office, by publicly breaking the baton, and coming down from his ſeat. Whereas for a man to do a thing, which nothing leſs than Omnipotence can undo, and which even that, in fact, will never be employed in undoing, to imprint a character, a ſomething which, in ſpite of angels, men, and devils, ſhall to eternity remain indelible, appears the reſult of a power inconceivable indeed, and little leſs than divine.

'Whence ideas of this kind originated, ideas that do not ſeem to quadrate with the ſo much boaſted power of the keys, which implies, alike, that of opening and that of ſhutting, admitting and excluding, binding and looſing; ideas of which the apoſtles and evangeliſts have no where given us the ſlighteſt hint, and of which it is plain they had not themſelves the ſmalleſt apprehenſion, is a matter of curious inquiry, and cloſely connected with the ſubject of the hierarchy. I ſhall therefore endeavour briefly to trace the riſe and progreſs of ſo ſtrange a doctrine.

'Eccleſiaſtical degrees were not inſtituted ori-

ginally under the notion of dignities, pre-eminencies, or honours, as they became afterwards, but as miniſtries, charges, and what the apoſtle Paul called ἔργα, works, 1 Tim. iii. 1. "If a man deſire the office of a biſhop," ſays he, "he deſireth a good work." Conſequently, if in any thing denominated the office of a biſhop, there be no work to do, it cannot be the office whereof the apoſtle ſpeaks; for the miſapplication of the name can never alter the nature of the thing. The perſons accordingly poſſeſſed of ſuch offices were ſtyled, both by our Lord and by Paul his apoſtle, ἐργάται, labourers, workmen. "The labourers are few," ſays the former, "and the workman is worthy of his meat." The latter recommends it to Timothy to acquit himſelf as "a workman that needeth not be aſhamed."

'For ſome time, indeed, it could hardly enter into the mind of any man to think himſelf entitled to decline executing perſonally, whilſt able to execute, a truſt ſolemnly committed to him, and which he had himſelf undertaken. For the terms *ordination* and *appointment to a particular paſtoral charge*, were perfectly ſynonymous. If one, however, in thoſe truly primitive times, (which but rarely happened) found it neceſſary to retire from the work, he never thought of retaining either the title or the emoluments. And though the miniſters were of two kinds, the one called anciently the miniſtry of the word, and, in later times, the cure of ſouls, and the other a miniſtry

in things temporal, for the ſupport and relief of the poor and infirm, as was the deaconſhip, thoſe in both offices were equally held bound to perſonal ſervice *. Nor would any one have thought, in the earlieſt ages, of ſerving by a deputy, unleſs for a ſhort time, and on account of ſome remarkable and unavoidable impediment; much leſs would he have accepted another charge that was incompatible with his former one. But to be made a biſhop, and in being ſo to receive no charge whatever, to have no work to execute, could have been regarded no otherwiſe than as a contradiction in terms.

'Indeed the name of the office implied the ſervice, without which it could not ſubſiſt, that is, without which there was no office. The name biſhop, as I have obſerved, means overſeer, and this is a term manifeſtly correlative to that which expreſſes the thing to be overſeen. The connection is equally neceſſary and eſſential as between father and child, ſovereign and ſubject, huſband and wife. The one is inconceivable without the other. Ye cannot make a man an overſeer to whom ye give no overſight, no more than ye can make a man a ſhepherd, to whom ye give

* The word *miniſtry*, like that of ordination, has been much miſapplied. It is generally confined to thoſe who labour in the word of doctrine. The view given of it by the Doctor is perfectly juſt. Paſtors have a particular miniſtry or ſervice to perform, and deacons one of a different kind. Both are *miniſters* in the church.

the charge of no ſheep, or a huſband to whom ye give no wife. Nay, in fact, as a man ceaſes to be a huſband, the moment that he ceaſes to have a wife, and is no longer a ſhepherd than he has the care of ſheep, ſo in the only proper and original import of the words, a biſhop continues a biſhop only whilſt he continues to have people under his ſpiritual care. Theſe things, indeed, are ſo plain, that one is almoſt aſhamed to attempt to illuſtrate them. Yet the changes that too ſoon enſued, have turned matters ſo entirely off their original bottom, that propoſitions which, in the age of the apoſtles, muſt have appeared ſelf-evident, require a careful developement to us moderns; ſo much is the import of names and phraſes altered in the courſe of ſome ſucceſſive centuries *.'

Dr Campbell proceeds to ſhew how the primitive idea of ordination was perverted by the practice of ordaining men without a charge, and afterwards by the fiction of an indelible character being communicated by ordination. He conſiders this to be equally abſurd as to make a man a king without a kingdom, or a huſband without a wife, and inquires, if unmeaning words will ſatisfy, why may not the myſtical, inviſible, indelible character of huſband be imprinted by ſuch a marriage as well as that of prieſt or biſhop by ſuch an ordination?

* Campbell's Lectures on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, vol i. p. 336, —341.

It is to be regretted that such unscriptural sentiments are not yet exploded. Some missionaries, when going abroad, are *ordained*. They are then clergymen, and entitled to the appellation of *Reverend*, while they are accompanied by so many lay-brethren, who are also intended to preach the gospel. What is meant by this distinction? Doubtless, all missionaries ought to be commended to the grace of God for his support and assistance; that is, *ordained* to the work in which they are engaged.

As to rank in civil society, Christianity leaves the officers of churches just as it finds them, neither raising nor lowering them in the smallest degree. It does not interfere with worldly titles and distinctions giving honour to whom honour is due, but it does not bestow such on any religious account, which are always an evident token of its corruptions. There are indeed various services to be performed in a church of Christ, and these give rise to different offices, to the discharge of whose duties some of the members must be called. But it is of importance to remember, that all distinction created by holding such offices, is wholly of a religious nature, confined entirely to the relations in which those who hold them stand to their brethren in the church, and do not, in the smallest degree, affect any of the relations of civil life. A separate and distinct order of men in society, created by official situation in a church of

Chriſt, is ſomething entirely foreign to the nature and ſpirit of the New Teſtament diſpenſation.

The diſtinction of clergy and laity has however been eagerly maintained, and this has been kept up by peculiarity of dreſs, and by certain titles. It may ſeem trifling to notice theſe, but circumſtances, inſignificant in themſelves, have more influence in the world than many ſuppoſe: 'Men are but children of a larger growth.' It has been obſerved that the world is ruled by names, and experience ſhews that there is much truth in the remark. The Lord did not think the ſubject too inſignificant to ſpeak on. He once and again notices the dreſs of the Scribes and Phariſees. "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; they deſire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets," Matt. xxiii. 5. Luke xx. 46. Connected with their dreſs, he mentions their love of titles, and forbids his diſciples to receive ſuch. "Be not ye called Rabbi." To ſay that the title of Reverend is a matter of no conſequence, is to charge this precept with being too trifling to be obſerved; and to aſſume or receive that, or any of ſimilar import, is a direct violation of its ſpirit and purpoſe. It ſeems very obvious, that in this paſſage the Lord Jeſus expreſsly prohibits the uſe of all honorary, excluſive titles of diſtinction in his kingdom, as entirely incompatible with its nature. They have a tendency, not only to puff up thoſe on whom they are conferred, but alſo to create

a falſe reſpect and veneration in the minds of others; and they introduce a worldly influence, deſtructive, as far as it goes, of Chriſtian principle. To violate this rule, then, is not ſo light a matter as many ſeem to ſuppoſe. Thoſe who are acquainted with human nature, and with the importance which many poor deluded votaries of Rome attach to the garments and titles of their prieſts, will be convinced of this. Indeed theſe have had no ſmall influence in maintaining that ſort of worldly diſtinction between miniſters and people, which has been ſo anxiouſly contended for.

As to titles, Dr Campbell juſtly obſerves, that in proportion as real religion declined, theſe were multiplied. The only object of titles or of peculiarity of habits, muſt be to procure reſpect for miniſters, by working on the prejudices and weakneſſes of mankind. But neither Jeſus nor his apoſtles ever ſought honour by ſuch means. They are human inventions, very neceſſary, it may be, in the kingdoms of this world, but can never prove of real benefit to religion. Let miniſters of the goſpel, by all means, avoid contempt; let them ſtudy to maintain the greateſt reſpectability. The word of God ſhews them an excellent way to obtain it: "Let no man deſpiſe thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity," 1 Tim. iv. 12.

Elders and deacons, we have ſeen, ought to be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the

preſbytery. Thus was Timothy ſet apart to the work of the miniſtry, 1 Tim. iv. 14. In a church newly formed, where there are no elders, or indeed where there are, it ſeems very proper that elders and others, as meſſengers from neighbouring churches, ſhould aſſiſt at their ordination; but this can by no means be ſaid to be indiſpenſable. Yet it tends to promote love and union among the churches, which is of much importance; for although they are completely independent of one another, and reſponſible for their conduct to Chriſt alone, they ought, as ſerving the ſame Maſter, and aſſociated for the ſame purpoſes, by mutual good offices to cultivate brotherly love.

The apoſtles ordained elders by prayer and faſting. This is recorded for our imitation, and certainly ought not to be omitted, conſidering the importance of the office, and that all depends on receiving the Lord's bleſſing on the ſervice. It is worthy of remark, that while ſo many diſputes have taken place as to the mode and validity of ordination, on which the Scriptures are in a great meaſure ſilent, ſo little attention ſhould have been paid to the character and qualifications of the perſons to be ordained, which are amply deſcribed in the word of God. It is ſtrange, too, that even as to the mode men have ſo generally departed from the Scriptures; for faſting upon ſuch occaſions has fallen into general diſuſe.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE ORDINANCES OBSERVED BY THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

THE apoſtles not only taught the diſciples to aſſemble together, and to chuſe elders and deacons, but alſo to obſerve certain ordinances. Some of theſe are mentioned in the account of the church of Jeruſalem, Acts ii. 42. "And they continued ſtedfaſtly in the *apoſtles' doctrine*, and the *fellowſhip*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers*," all of which they obſerved regularly on the firſt day of every week or Lord's day. We find the church alſo, when aſſembled, ſinging the praiſes of God and engaged in faſting.

SECTION I.

Of the Apoſtles' Doctrine.

THE apoſtles received a commandment from Chriſt, to *preach* the goſpel to every creature. Κηρυσσω, *to preach*, properly ſignifies to perform the office of a herald, to make proclamation. Thus Jonah preached to Nineveh, Jon. iii. 4. See alſo Matt. iii. 1. iv. 17. x. 7. Mark xvi 15. Acts x. 42. &c. To *preach* the goſpel always ſignifies to make known by proclamation the glad

tidings of salvation. It does not mean in Scripture an explanation of or a comment on a doctrine, or any chain of reasoning, but a proclamation of facts, and of truths connected with these facts *.

It was by the preaching of the gospel that churches were gathered, and as we are ever prone to let the saving truth slip from our minds, it is necessary that the churches be constantly put in remembrance of it. Thus Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I *preached* unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain: for I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 1,—4. Upon this glorious truth the apostles founded every exhortation which they delivered to the churches.

But preaching is not exclusively a church ordinance. Those who labour in the word and doctrine, ought to account it their duty and privilege to publish, wherever they have opportunity, the glad tidings of salvation; to be instant in season out of season. Nor ought others who have talents for this to consider themselves at liberty

* See the Preliminary Dissertations to Campbell's Translation of the Gospels, Dissert. vi. part 5.

to hide these in a napkin. Every Christian, as he hath received the gift, ought to minister the same as a faithful steward of the manifold grace of God. Churches ought to observe the various endowments of their members, and to excite them to diligence in the use of these. They must provoke one another to love and good works. One end of their association is to prevent any of the talents committed to them as individuals from being lost, neglected or abused.

Wherever we meet with men who are ignorant of the gospel, the law of love requires that we should make known to them the way of salvation, and call upon them to repent and believe the gospel. Some have given up preaching to and addressing or entreating sinners altogether, alleging that we have no warrant to do so *. But the duty is so obvious, it comes so expressly under the precept of loving our neighbour as ourselves, and of doing as we would be done by, that before we could vindicate our neglecting to preach the gospel as we have opportunity, it would be necessary to shew that God in his word has directly prohibited it.

Some, who have not carried matters quite so

* This objection arises from our having no express commission except that given to the apostles; but was not this evidently intended for all ages? The objection is exactly the same as that made against the directions to the first churches being designed for these in all ages, that we have only the rules designed for the *apostolic* churches. Those who see the weakness of the reasoning in the one case, may clearly perceive it in the other.

far, have yet uſed no means to induce ſinners, even thoſe whom perhaps they might eaſily influence, to come to hear the goſpel. Their worſhip is conducted ſolely with a view to the edification of the church. Our doors, ſay they, are open; any one may come in and hear the teſtimony of the goſpel, they may alſo hear us exhort one another, and thus may be convinced and converted. But is this acting properly? Had the apoſtles ſo learned Chriſt? Do their writings breathe ſuch a ſpirit? or do we find that churches are leſs edified where greater zeal is diſcovered for the converſion of ſinners, and where ſuitable and ſcriptural means are employed for this purpoſe? Zeal for the general diffuſion of the goſpel will always keep pace with the ſucceſs of the work of God in a church.

We have already ſeen that the elders who are qualified for it, are to labour in the word and doctrine. It is not only neceſſary that the goſpel ſhould be preached for quickening the dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, but that the diſciples ſhould be *taught* to obſerve all things whatſoever the Lord has commanded. *Teaching* includes inſtruction in all the ordinances of Chriſt, the explanation of their nature and end, as well as directing them in the due performance of all perſonal and relative duties. It comprehends every kind of inſtruction for informing the ignorant, confuting gainſayers, and leading believers from the firſt principles of Chriſtianity through all the intermediate ſteps,

to the perfect knowledge of all the revealed will of God in the Scriptures *. In the epistles to Timothy and Titus, we have ample information with regard to that teaching which is necessary in the churches of the saints. Timothy was to commit the instructions which he had received from Paul, to faithful men who should be able to teach others; and it is absolutely necessary that an elder be fit to *teach* these, and to open the sacred Scriptures.

Intimately connected with teaching, although not precisely the same, is *exhortation*. It means to excite, by words spoken, to any duty. It comprehends entreaty, consolation, expostulation and rebuke. Teaching means pointing out what is duty, exhortation enforces the practice of it. Thus the apostles *exhorted* the believers to continue in the faith, Acts xiv. 21. and Barnabas *exhorted* them all, that, with purpose of heart, they should cleave unto the Lord, Acts xi. 23.

Teaching and *exhortation* are important parts of the duty of elders, but are not to be confined to them. The members of a church are bound to teach and admonish one another, Col. iii. 16. The apostle was persuaded of the Romans, that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another, ch. xv. 14. He informs the Corinthians that they might all prophesy, 1 Cor. xiv. 31. and takes notice of

* See an essay on the means by which the gospel was preached in the world, Miss. Mag. Vol. I. pag. 5.

the good effects likely to arise from it. In the commandment that women should keep silence in the churches, it is implied that the men were at liberty to speak, and he commands the believers to *exhort* one another daily while it is called to-day, Heb. iii. 13. One great end for which Christians are commanded to assemble, is, that they might have stated opportunities of mutual exhortation. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but *exhorting one another*." Thus ought all the gifts possessed by the members to be turned to account.

Christians in this country have experienced the good effects of mutual exhortation in their fellowship meetings. In consequence of not being connected with churches of Christ, they were deprived of this and various other advantages, and to supply the deficiency, they met together in private. But a church of Christ furnishes all the means of grace within itself, and although it does not prevent the members from meeting more privately, it does not oblige them to do so in order to enjoy the benefit of mutual exhortation.

Under the head of the apostles' doctrine we must not omit another important appointed means for the edification of the churches—*reading* the Scriptures in their public assemblies. The reading of Moses and the prophets was long practised in the Jewish synagogues. Of this mention is made in the New Testament. At a very early

period after our Lord's aſcenſion, the apoſtles began to write and to publiſh the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, and it was intended that theſe writings ſhould be publicly read, as is evident from the injunctions delivered to the churches. Thus Paul, in writing to the church at Coloſſe, "When this epiſtle is read amongſt you, cauſe that it be read alſo in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewiſe read the epiſtle from Laodicea," ch. iv. 16. The ſame exhortation is elſewhere very ſtrongly enforced: "I charge you by the Lord, that this epiſtle be read unto all the holy brethren," 1 Theſſ. v. 27. Reading was not an occaſional duty, and the writings which were occaſionally addreſſed to the churches by the apoſtles, were not thoſe only which were read. It ſeems to have been a ſtated exerciſe, and no doubt was extended to all thoſe parts of Scripture which were then in exiſtence. Timothy is enjoined to diſcharge with diligence and conſtancy this part of duty: "Till I come, give attendance to *reading*, to exhortation, to doctrine." That this refers to public reading, ſeems probable from the conſideration that the apoſtle's deſign is to inſtruct Timothy, and through him, the miniſters of Chriſt in all ages, how he and they ought to behave in the houſe of God: reading, alſo, is here connected with teaching and exhortation.

Indeed when we conſider, that, through the goodneſs of God, his whole revelation is contained in a ſmall volume, nothing appears more

reaſonable than that a part of it ſhould conſtantly be read in the churches of the ſaints, that their views of divine truth may be enlarged, and that the word of Chriſt may dwell in them richly.

The word of God enjoins *all things to be done to edification;* but let not this direction be abuſed to ſet aſide any of the Lord's ordinances. As no order or form of proceeding on the Lord's day is preſcribed or related in Scripture, and as many beſides the church frequently attend, we ought to have in view the benefit of all who hear, and to conduct the ſervices in ſuch a manner that this, as well as the edification of the church, may alſo be promoted.

SECTION II.

Of the fellowſhip or Contribution.

WE have already conſidered what is meant by the church at Jeruſalem having all things in common, απαντα κοινα. Hence is derived κοινωνια, fellowſhip or communion. As it was the duty of every church to aſſiſt its poor members, and as this aſſiſtance was beſtowed by the voluntary contributions of all the members, the term came into general uſe. Thus Paul writes, "It hath pleaſed them of Macedonia to make a certain *fellowſhip*," Rom. xv. 26. The ſame word occurs, 2 Cor. ix. 13. your liberal *fellowſhip*, and in various other places. The Greek fathers uſe ελεημοσυνη, *alms*,

as a ſynonymous term. Juſtin Martyr informs us, that, in his time, after the ordinance of the ſupper, every one that was able and willing, gave according to his ability, and what was gathered was committed to the care of the biſhop, who relieved therewith the orphans and widows, the ſick and diſtreſſed, priſoners, ſtrangers, travellers, and, in a word, all that had need thereof*.

It is evident then that by the fellowſhip in which the diſciples ſtedfaſtly continued, Acts ii. 42. is meant the contribution jointly made by the church for the relief of the poor; and this is an additional argument to prove the communion of all things in the church at Jeruſalem to have been what was before ſet forth. Every church ought to conſider this to be an important ordinance, and the members ought to give liberally, as the Lord has proſpered them in this life, remembering the words of the Lord Jeſus how he ſaid, "It is more bleſſed to give than to receive." This ordinance has a powerful influence in promoting love in a church, and in leading the members to view themſelves as one family. It ſhews that the Lord has at once made proviſion for the ſpiritual and temporal wants of his people, when aſſociated according to his will, and obſerving his commandments. The apoſtle ſeems to refer particularly to this ordinance, Heb. xiii. 16. τῆς δὲ εὐποιΐας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε, *do not for-*

* Lord King's Inquiry, Part II. ch vi. See alſo the account of κοινωνια, Suiceri Theſaurus, Vol. II. p. 125.

get the doing of good and the fellowſhip, for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.

With a view of ſupporting the poor, ſome have thought of laying up a fund, a part, or the intereſt of which, is to be employed for this purpoſe; but this is improper, and is calculated to defeat one great end of the ordinance of the fellowſhip. In appointing this ordinance, the Lord, it would ſeem, not only had in view the ſupplying the wants of his people, but the advancement of brotherly love and tenderneſs of heart in Chriſtians to each other. This end will be beſt attained by a ſupply conſtantly miniſtered, according to the neceſſities of the ſaints at the time they occur. This prevents money being taken out of the hands of the Lord's people, who ſhould employ it as his ſtewards, until it be needed. It may be urged, that, without a fund, there will be danger of a deficiency. Let it be remembered, that the Lord will have a ſeed to ſerve him for ever, that the ſilver and gold are his, and that we have reaſon in this, as in other things, confidently to expect that, as our day is, ſo ſhall our ſtrength be. Let us, to the utmoſt of our power, then, ſupport our poor brethren to-day, and let us not be afraid of to-morrow.

Section III.

Breaking of Bread, or the Lord's Supper.

This is another ordinance appointed by Christ to be observed in the churches. It was observed by the church of Jerusalem, Acts ii. 42. Paul delivered this ordinance to the church of Corinth by revelation from the Lord: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me," 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.

The Lord's supper is a social ordinance. When observing it, we profess our faith in the death of Jesus, as the only ground of our hope. By thus shewing forth or commemorating his death, we declare our confidence of his resurrection and his second coming, 1 Cor. xi. 26. We also profess our union one with another, as many members of the one body of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 17. Under the law, when a sacrifice of peace-offering was offered, after certain parts had been burnt on the altar, and others given to the priest, the offerer feasted with his family on what remained. This represented his fellowship with God, and the satisfaction enjoyed in this fellowship. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. He is our peace-offering, and we ought to observe the Lord's sup-

per, joying in God through Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have alſo received the atonement. Eating and drinking of the emblems of his ſacrifice, repreſents this.

We have the ſame evidence that this ordinance was a ſtated part of the worſhip of the churches every Lord's day, as that they ſtatedly obſerved the day at all by aſſembling together. In Acts ii. 42. we read, "They continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles' doctrine, and in the fellowſhip, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." It is evident the ordinance of the ſupper is here intended by the breaking of bread; for ſurely an account of their common meals would not be introduced between the different parts of God's worſhip; and it ſeems equally plain, that they were as conſtant in breaking bread, as in attending on the apoſtles' doctrine and public prayer. It formed a part, then, of their ſtated worſhip.

We have an explicit teſtimony to the ſame purpoſe, in Acts xx. 7. "Upon the firſt day of the week, when the diſciples came together *to break bread*, Paul preached unto them." The church at Troas was probably planted by Paul. We learn in this chapter, that while *haſting* to ſpend the day of Pentecoſt at Jeruſalem, he paſſed through Troas, where he arrived on the day called by us Monday, and, notwithſtanding his haſte, tarried with them ſeven days, evidently waiting for the firſt day of the week, that he

might give suitable exhortation to the whole church. On the first day of the week they assembled, and we learn that the object of their coming together was to break bread. Doubtless Paul had met with some of them before; we may be sure he was not idle during the six days, but he had not an opportunity of meeting the whole church, till the first day of the week *. Paul's anxiety to be gone is very evident, for he preached till break of day, and then departed on his journey, ver. 11.; and yet he waited a whole week for the purpose of commemorating the death of Jesus, and preaching to the whole church, none of whom he knew would omit the observance of this ordinance on the Lord's day.

It was also the custom for the disciples at Corinth to come together into one place, 1 Cor. xi. 20. and this meeting was upon the first day of the week, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. When they met, they did eat and drink, professing to observe the Lord's supper. The apostle, however, informs them, that they abused it so much that their observance did not deserve the name, ver. 20. and they had better not meet at all. He then proceeds to point out the manner of worthily observing the ordinance, ver. 23. 29. He does not say they did it too often or too seldom, but that

* This exactly agrees with the testimony of Justin Martyr, who lived in the year 155, who says, that on the day called Sunday the bishop's whole diocese, both of the city and the country, met together, when the bishop gave them the eucharist.

they did it unworthily. Can there be a doubt as to the frequency of their observing it? Surely not. They came together in one place on the first day of the week, and the only object of their meeting on that day *here mentioned*, is to eat the Lord's supper. This they must have been taught to do by the apostles, who appointed the same ordinances in every church; so that an account of the order settled in one, is the account of the whole.

No one can shew clearer evidence from Scripture, for observing every first day of the week instead of the Sabbath, than has been here given for partaking of the Lord's supper on that day. Some subsidiary arguments may indeed be brought for them: the honour, *e.g.* put on the first day of the week, by the Lord appearing on it once and again to the apostles; the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which happened on that day; its being called the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10. &c. But all these would be insufficient to justify our practice, and to render the neglect of the first day of the week a sin, exclusive of the custom of the apostolic churches, recorded in the word of God for our imitation. Corroborating arguments may also be brought for observing the ordinance of the supper weekly; the Lord, it may be said, has not limited us in the words of the institution, "*As oft* as ye eat," &c. therefore we are not guilty of sin, in frequently attending to this command. The ordinance was instituted on pur-

poſe to diſplay the love of Chriſt; and if we love him becauſe he firſt loved us, ſurely we cannot too often bring under our review the greatneſs of his love, and, by this ordinance, have Chriſt crucified evidently ſet forth before our eyes. There ſeems alſo a peculiar propriety, as we commemorate the reſurrection weekly, at the ſame time to remember his death; but however reaſonable ſuch arguments may ſhew our worſhip to be, the queſtion muſt be decided by the revelation of God, from which, if we once depart, there is no ſaying where we ſhall ſtop. Departing from Scripture is the foundation of all will-worſhip; but if we hearken to what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches, whether by precept or by approbation of their practice, we cannot err.

The practice of the firſt ages is juſt what we might expect from the word of God. This ought not altogether to be overlooked; for though we pay no reſpect to the authority of the fathers, as they are called, their teſtimony is certainly to be regarded reſpecting ſuch a matter of fact as the frequency of adminiſtering the ordinance of the ſupper.

'Conſider,' ſays Mr Randal, 'antiquity in what view you pleaſe, the elder or the later accounts;—conſider it among enemies or friends;—view it in its truth or in its lies;—in its ſimplicity or in its ſuperſtitions;—conſider all the accounts which all ſorts of men have given, take the evidence from as diſtant corners of the world,

and as oppoſite characters in it as you pleaſe, from thoſe who have no bias but to the truth, or from ſuch whoſe opinions and intereſts would lead them to give this fact a colour if it could bear it, —and all with one voice ſhall declare, that to come together on the firſt day of the week to break bread, was from the beginning, and for many ages, the cuſtom, the uninterrupted, unqueſtioned, indiſputed practice of all Chriſtian churches :—as much ſo, as it was their practice to ſanctify the Lord's day, or to pray, praiſe, and preach the apoſtles' doctrine upon it :—that as this was the moſt diſtinguiſhing part of their worſhip, ſo was it what they and their worſhip was deſcribed by, (Pliny's letter), and the action by which, among themſelves the Lord's day was known, *(dies panis)*, what conſequently they would leaſt and laſt of all have omitted, while any degree of the purity of the goſpel remained among them. How ſtrongly then does all this place this matter before us ! how clearly does this appear as the light from the Scripture ! And when all antiquity reflects it too, in ſo direct a manner to us, what can we do, but confeſs it as a part of the truth coming from Chriſt, that it is his will, and our duty, to *continue ſtedfaſtly in the breaking of bread, often doing this in remembrance of him* *.'

Dr Erſkine ſhews, that during the three firſt centuries no canons were made to enforce frequent

* Randal on the Lord's ſupper, p. 31.

communion, but that after the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, many laws were neceſſary. Hiſtory, ſays he, informs us, that weekly communions were generally kept up till the year 450. The churches which firſt of all neglected the ordinance weekly, and juſtified this by a certain ancient tradition, were thoſe at Rome and Alexandria *.

The reformers were fully aware of the apoſtolic practice reſpecting the Lord's ſupper. Calvin thus expreſſes his views: 'Every Lord's day the table ſhould be ſpread in the church, and though none ſhould be conſtrained, all ſhould be exhorted to the repaſt, the infrequency of obſerving which was Satan's contrivance †.' Eminent men of the church of Scotland have avowed the ſame ſentiments.

Dr Erſkine obſerves, 'We are told that introducing frequent communion is an innovation, and that all innovations are dangerous. But it is an innovation in no other ſenſe, than the doctrine of juſtification in the days of Luther. The trueſt and pureſt antiquity is on our ſide; whereas, our preſent practice is a plain defection from the primitive pattern.'

It ſeems ſtrange indeed, as we have already

* Dr Erſkine, having quoted Socrates the hiſtorian for this fact, and obſerving that probably Alexandria had followed Rome in this matter, concludes, We ſee then *to what we owe the neglect of weekly communions, even to the pretended traditions of the church of Rome.* Theolog. Differt. p. 270.

† Inſtitut. Rel. Chriſt. lib. iv. cap. 17. § 45, 46.

ſaid, to ſeparate the ordinances of the firſt day of the week and the Lord's ſupper, the one intended to commemorate the death, the other the reſurrection of Jeſus; and one conſequence of doing ſo is, that many profeſſors, and perhaps even ſome Chriſtians, almoſt forget that the firſt day of the week is obſerved in commemoration of our Lord's reſurrection *.

One great end of the Lord's ſupper is to repreſent the union of Chriſtians with one another, through their union with their Lord. "The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs †, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt? As (there is) one bread, we (being) many are one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread," 1 Cor. x. 16. Here we find, that the unity of thoſe who join in obſerving the ordinance, is repreſented by their all

* Dr Doddridge obſerves, that it plainly appears from the moſt credible account of the primitive church, that the Lord's ſupper was uſed much more frequently among them than with us, and that it made a part of their public worſhip every Lord's day. He refers on this ſubject to Pearce on the Euch. p. 174,—177. Erſkine on Frequent Communion, *paſſim*. Richard Baxter's works, vol. i. p. 470.—476. Calv. Inſtit. lib. iv. ſect. xvii. § 44,—46. Witſii Econ. Faed. lib. iv. c. xvii. § 33. See Doddridge's Lectures on Divinity, &c. Prop. clv.

† Some would here ſupply διὰ for "which we bleſs," or rather for "which we give thanks." At all events it is evident, by the account of the inſtitution, that God was bleſſed, or thanks given to him, and that the bleſſing does not refer to the bread and wine, or to what has been called their conſecration.

partaking of one bread. This clearly ſhews us, that the church ſhould all communicate at the ſame time, and not at different times, as is the cuſtom with many in Scotland. This ordinance is much calculated to promote mutual love, and to repreſent the complete ſeparation which the goſpel makes between Chriſtians and the world. It is a ſign or witneſs to thoſe who look for him, that the Lord will come again without ſin unto ſalvation, and is thus intended to ſtrengthen their faith and hope.

No ordinance has been more generally or groſsly perverted and miſunderſtood than this. It was changed at Corinth into a common entertainment; afterwards the elements came to be worſhipped; and ſtill ſuperſtition and a ſpirit of bondage in regard to it, which have no foundation in Scripture, too much prevail. Some will not partake, they are ſo unworthy: are not theſe ſeeking juſtification, as it were, by the works of the law? Does Chriſt receive only the worthy? In ſuch words and thoughts there wanteth not ſin, although attired in the garb of humility. Is not their language exactly that of the ſlothful ſervant, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man?" He was too humble, too diffident of his abilities to make uſe of his talent, and ſome are too diffident of themſelves to ſit down at the table of the Lord; but they are not aware that this ariſes in fact from diſtruſt in Chriſt, from pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs, i. e. from unwillingneſs to ſubmit to

the righteouſneſs of God, and to receive mercy as guilty ſinners, totally independent of their own worthineſs.

It is a ſimilar error which has produced the objection that weekly communion will deſtroy all ſolemnity. Does frequency in prayer make us leſs ſolemn in the duty? Does the weekly return of the Lord's day deſtroy its ſolemnity? Should we be more ſolemn at family-worſhip, if we only attended to the duty once a-month? But the Lord's ſupper, it is ſaid, is more ſolemn than any other duty. Where do we learn this? Not in Scripture *. We muſt not believe every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits by the teſtimony of God. It may ſeem as if we argued againſt ſolemnity; but we only argue againſt attaching ſuch a degree of ſolemnity to one ordinance, as tends to make us tremble to obſerve it with due frequency, and diminiſhes our reverence for others appointed by the ſame authority. We do not argue *againſt* the ſolemnity of this ordinance, we argue *for* the due ſolemnity of every ordinance †.

* Some think that this is implied in the precept to examine ourſelves in connection with this ordinance, 1 Cor. xi. 29. But this caution was rendered neceſſary by the abuſe of the ordinance.

† For a more particular account of this ordinance, ſee Randal and Erſkine on Frequent Communion. Alſo a Letter, by the Author, to the church of Chriſt aſſembling in the Tabernacle, Edinburgh, with Miſcellaneous Obſervations.

Section IV.

Of Prayer and Praiſe.

We have taken notice of the gracious promiſe which the Lord has made to his diſciples, to be in the midſt of two or three aſſembled in his name. This not only implies that it is his will that they ſhould aſſemble together, it alſo teaches the aſſemblies of his people to expect his ſuperintendance and bleſſing. Yet for all the bleſſings he beſtows, he will be enquired of by them. Prayer is an expreſſion of our dependence on God. It implies a ſenſe of our own inſufficiency, and confidence in God as the giver of every good and perfect gift. It is therefore an important duty in members of the ſame church, to bear one another on their hearts before God. But we now ſpeak of prayer as an ordinance of God for his people when aſſembled.

He has ſaid, that where two agree on earth touching what they ſhall aſk, he will do it for them, Matt. xviii. 19. Whenever any emergency occurs in a church, any difficulty, for inſtance, or caſe of diſcipline, it is the duty of a church to be earneſt in prayer. In their ordinary and ſtated meetings, this ought alſo to form an important part of their exerciſes. In proportion as religion proſpers in a church, will a ſpirit of grace and ſupplication make this manifeſt.

Praying in the church ought not to be confined

to the elders. The brethren ought to account it their duty and privilege, when called upon, to lead the worſhip. We find the brethren at Corinth reproved for the abuſe of miraculous gifts, by praying in an unknown tongue in the church, and they are directed to pray ſo as to be underſtood, 1 Cor. xiv. 14. As to the poſture of prayer, we find in Scripture that both ſtanding and kneeling were practiſed.

Praiſe is another delightful part of inſtituted worſhip. It moſt nearly reſembles the worſhip of heaven, where they praiſe God day and night. Paul exhorts us to ſing in pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, Col. iii. 16. The Pſalms, chiefly compoſed by David, are a moſt beautiful and uſeful part of Scripture. Jeſus is no where more plainly predicted, nor could there be a more ſuitable directory for the praiſes of the Old Teſtament church; but certainly, as we pray in New Teſtament language, we ought alſo to praiſe in the ſame, and not always ſing of the ſalvation of Chriſt in prophecies, types, and figures. Can we ſing too plainly concerning him who was dead and is alive? At the ſame time, many of the Pſalms are ſo evidently deſcriptive of the ſufferings of Chriſt, and his glory which followed, that they are excellently adapted for the edification and comfort of believers. This inſpired collection, therefore, ought by no means to be laid aſide. But ſurely that zeal is merely the effect of prejudice, and not according to knowledge,

which would exclude New Teſtament language from the ſongs of New Teſtament churches; nor can there be any good reaſon why other paſſages ſhould not be uſed in praiſe as well as the pſalms. We are not limited to theſe by the word of God.

Praiſe is an expreſſion of joy. Is any man joyful, (ευθυμει)? let him ſing pſalms, James v. 13. As praiſe is an immediate addreſs to God, it is certainly proper, that the poſture in which this part of worſhip is frequently performed by Chriſtians ſhould be altered. Sitting while ſinging the praiſes of God, is equally improper with ſitting in prayer. We may pray or ſing, indeed, in any poſture; but ſtill we ought, even in the poſture of our bodies, to expreſs our reverence for God.

We have no inſtance in Scripture of an aſſembly ſitting while ſinging the praiſes of God. Iſrael was exhorted to *ſtand up* and bleſs the Lord their God, Neh. ix. 5. In the temple they *ſtood* and ſang the praiſes of God, Pſal. cxxxiv. 1. cxxxv. 1,—3. This too is the poſture in which the ſaints before the throne are repreſented, Rev. vii. 9.

Section V.

Of Faſting.

We noticed faſting as another ordinance to be obſerved by the churches.

A religious faſt is a ſeaſon of peculiar humiliation before God. It ſuppoſes abſtinence even from lawful and ordinary enjoyments *. It may be obſerved, either with the view of promoting ſpirituality of mind and deadneſs to the world, or when we are deſirous that ſome calamity ſhould be averted with which we are threatened; or in the time of calamity to confeſs we are puniſhed leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and to pray for mercy. It was practiſed in the church of Antioch, Acts xiii. 3. it was joined with prayer at the ordination of elders, Acts xiv. 23.

Faſting on extraordinary occaſions is evidently an important duty. The great day of atonement was a ſolemn faſt when Iſrael was to afflict their ſouls and confeſs their ſins. It was much practiſed by the people of God, and much countenanced by him under the Old Teſtament. He calls to the duty on particular occaſions: "Blow the trumpet in Sion, ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly: Gather the people, ſanctify the congregation, aſſemble the elders, gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her cloſet; let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen

* Although it is ſo evident from the word of God, that faſting implies abſtinence from food, there are many Chriſtians who deem this unneceſſary ſtrictneſs, if not legal bondage.

ſhould rule over them; wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, Where is their God?" Joel ii. 15,—17. Jeſus gives us directions how to perform it: "Moreover, when ye faſt, be not, as the hypocrites, of a ſad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to faſt. Verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thine head and waſh thy face, that thou appear not unto men to faſt, but unto thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 16,—18. He informs us alſo of its efficacy; "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and faſting," Matt. xvii. 21. He indeed told the Phariſees, that it would be improper in his diſciples to faſt while he was with them; but that when he left them, then they would faſt. That it is the duty of Chriſtians to faſt, is clearly implied in various other paſſages of Scripture. Thus, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with conſent for a time, that ye may give yourſelves to *faſting* and prayer," 1 Cor. vii. 5.

It is no objection to this being a church ordinance that our Lord gives directions to avoid oſtentation in private faſting. The ſame would hold againſt prayer, almſgiving, &c. We have no precept reſpecting the frequency or the exact manner of obſerving a religious faſt. No man therefore has a right to preſcribe to another on this head. Circumſtances muſt be attended to;

we muſt conſider what our conſtitutions can bear, and what our ſituations will admit. We are not called to injure our health. We may ſay of faſting, as our Lord ſaid of the Sabbath, "it was made for man, not man for it." Faſting is an ordinance for his benefit, and much of the advantage we have reaſon to expect from it depends on obſerving it in a proper manner, whither in public or private.

It is highly proper that a contribution for the poor ſhould be connected with faſting. If we be under the influence of a covetous ſpirit, we are but mocking God. "Is it ſuch a faſt that I have choſen? a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh?" Iſa. lviii. 5, 6, 7. The Lord does not here diſapprove of *outward* humiliation, but expreſſes his contempt of the outward appearance, while the heart is not right with him.

Section VI.

Sanctification of the firſt day of the Week.

God from the beginning ſanctified the ſeventh day. On that day, he reſted from his works; and no other account can be given of his bleſſing and ſanctifying it, than that he intended man to ſet apart that day for religious worſhip *. Indeed, it appears that God ſpent ſix days in the work of creation, and reſted on the ſeventh, becauſe he intended that man ſhould follow the ſame order.

We have no account of the obſervance of this day before the children of Iſrael left Egypt; but this no more proves that it was not previouſly obſerved, than the ſilence of Scripture proves that there were no meetings before that time for religious purpoſes, or that the ſabbatical year was never obſerved in Iſrael, or that circumciſion was neglected from Joſhua's time to John the Baptiſt's. We have ſtrong preſumptive evidence of its obſervance, from days being reckoned by ſevens by the patriarchs, and this appears to be the origin of the perfection attributed to that number, and from the period of *weeks*, which ſeems before that a common mode of computing time.

* Dr Kennicott would interpret Gen. ii. 3. "And God reſted on the ſeventh day from all his works which he had made; and God cauſed (man) to bleſs and worſhip on the ſeventh day, and ordered him to ſanctify it." Two Diſſert. on the Tree of Life, &c. Oxford, 1747, p. 126.

God gave to Iſrael his ſabbaths, commanding them to obſerve them, and to do no work thereon. This was to believers a ſign of their entering into his reſt, and ceaſing from their works as he did from his. It alſo reminded them that the God of the whole earth had given them reſt from Egyptian bondage. The redemption of Iſrael was a figure of the redemption of the people of God. The reſt from Egyptian bondage was a ſhadow of the reſt which believers obtain. Hence the Jewiſh ſabbath is called a ſhadow of things to come, Col. ii. 16. and when Chriſt (who was the body) came, this, as other ſhadows, fled away.

When he who laid the foundations of the earth appeared in our nature, and redeemed his people by his blood, he roſe from the dead on the firſt day of the week. On that day, he reſted from a greater work than that of creation. It is called the Lord's day *, Rev. i. 10. which ſeems exactly to coincide with the 118th Pſalm, where the reſurrection of Chriſt is propheſied of, ver. 22. "The ſtone which the builders refuſed is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes," compared with Acts iv. 11. It is immediately added, ver. 24. "This is the *day* God made; we will rejoice and be glad in it:" and probably the apoſtle alludes to this change of the ſabbath, or reſt, when he ſays,

* All hiſtory is a comment upon this name. However much men called Chriſtians differed in other reſpects, they agreed that the firſt day of the week had come in place of the ſeventh.

"There remains therefore, σαββατισμος, a reſt for the people of God," Heb. iv. 9.

Life and immortality were now brought to light. New heavens and a new earth were created, in compariſon of which, the former were not to be remembered nor to come into mind, Iſa. lxv. 17. The Lord diſtinguiſhed the day on which he roſe, by appearing to his diſciples once and again upon it; and theſe appearances are recorded for our inſtruction *. It was not neceſſary to enforce the obſervance of the firſt day of the week by a poſitive precept in the New Teſtament, as the day, not the duty, itſelf was changed. We have alſo poſitive evidence that this day was ſtatedly obſerved by the churches. Thus the church at Troas met on the firſt day of the week, and the church of Corinth did the ſame, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Some Jewiſh believers, it appears, alſo obſerved the ſabbath; but we have no hint of any who neglected the firſt day of the week, nor can we conceive this to have been a matter on which the apoſtle would have ſpoken as he did of the other, which was now grown obſolete, Rom. xiv. 6.

We know from Scripture that it is the will of God that the churches ſhould aſſemble on this

* Surely there muſt be a particular reaſon for our being informed of the repeated appearances of our Lord on the firſt day of the week. Luke xxiv. 13. John xx. 19. 26. and what ſo natural as the ſuppoſition that he intended peculiar honour to this day?

day. Thus we keep the ſeventh part of our time holy to the Lord. There is indeed a change of the day, and this we ſee warranted by the example of the apoſtolic churches. Probably the Lord alluded to the change, when he declared himſelf "the Lord of the Sabbath." Through his reſurrection, which on that day we commemorate, we are begotten to a lively hope of entering into the heavenly reſt; and obſerving the firſt day of the week in faith, we enjoy the earneſt of it, Heb. iv. 3. It ought then to be a day of holy joy. The churches ought upon it to aſſemble for the obſervance of the ordinances, and to enjoy fellowſhip with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and thus to ſtrengthen the bond of love which knits them to Chriſt and to each other.

In private, Chriſtians ought to devote this day to religious exerciſes. Every day they are to walk in the fear of God; but in proportion as they are ſpiritually-minded, they will delight in that day, and feel it their duty to exclude the world from their thoughts, and, in meditation of the glory of Chriſt, to anticipate the happineſs of an eternal Sabbath.

We are not to obſerve a Phariſaical Sabbath, which our Lord repeatedly cenſures. We have no right to puniſh the profanation of it by temporal penalties; for the kingdom of Iſrael, as governed during the theocracy, is now at an end, and whatever Jewiſh peculiarity was added to the original inſtitution is now aboliſhed: but ſtill we

muſt not ſet aſide the fourth commandment. We have a ſtrong proof of its univerſal obligation in its being given amongſt nine others, which are always to be obſerved. It is true that a circumſtantial difference has been made on the commandment by divine authority, but ſtill the precept of devoting a ſeventh part of our time peculiarly to God is ſanctioned by the example of the apoſtles. Our Lord's directing his diſciples to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath, Matt. xxiv. 20. is a ſtrong evidence that they were to obſerve a day under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, although the Jewiſh Sabbath was aboliſhed *, Col. ii. 16.

Some pay a conſiderable degree of outward reſpect to the firſt day of the week, while they do not conſider it to be a divine inſtitution, or at leaſt have not their minds fully made up on the ſubject. It is obvious however, that ſuch a ſtate of mind in regard to any part of divine truth, is hurtful; and therefore every Chriſtian ſhould examine the ſubject ſeriouſly, that his obſervance of the day may be an act of obedience to God, and not of compliance with cuſtom, or the effect of education. None will obſerve this day ſo conſcientiouſly and ſtrictly, as thoſe who have ſeen with their own eyes good grounds for their practice.

* Some would tranſlate σαββάτων, (ſabbaths) in this paſſage, *weeks*, and ſuppoſe an alluſion to be made to the weeks under the law, which were particularly holy on account of certain feaſts.

Section VII.

Of Baptiſm.

Baptism is not a ſocial ordinance. It is appointed for individuals. As all perſons, however, who were added to the apoſtolic churches were baptiſed, it may be proper to conſider it in this place.

We have various inſtances of its being adminiſtered in private, as in the caſe of the eunuch, Acts viii. the jailor at Philippi, &c. Indeed, when the apoſtles came to a place where there was no church, it could not be otherwiſe. Theſe inſtances, however, do not render it improper to adminiſter baptiſm in a church of Chriſt. Where this can be conveniently done, it may certainly be for edification, and parents ought highly to eſteem the prayers of their brethren on behalf of their children, which in this caſe they have a peculiar opportunity of enjoying.

Baptiſm, like the Lord's ſupper, is an emblematic ordinance. God has been pleaſed in every age, to inſtruct us by ſenſible repreſentations as well as by the verbal declaration of his will. Theſe are calculated to make a deep impreſſion on our minds, and to prevent our letting ſlip the truth from our memories.

When the goſpel was preached to our firſt parents, it appears that ſacrifices were appointed,

Gen. iv. 4. Thus a lively repreſentation was given of the great ſin-offering which they were taught to expect. When God made a covenant with Noah, that the earth ſhould no more be overflowed with water, Gen. ix. 11. he appointed the rainbow a viſible pledge or ſeal of its accompliſhment.

When Abraham was called to go forth from his native country, he knew not whither, he obeyed; and when it was naturally impoſſible that he could have a child, he believed God that his ſeed ſhould be numerous as the ſtars of heaven. His faith was counted to him for righteouſneſs, and he was called the friend of God, and conſtituted the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, Rom. iv. 16, 17.

God made an everlaſting covenant with Abraham, to be a God to him and to his ſeed after him, Gen. xvii. 7. Chriſt was the ſeed eſpecially alluded to in this promiſe. God was peculiarly his God, and it is in virtue of our relation to him that he is our God, John xx. 17. "Hence," ſays the apoſtle, "he ſaith not unto ſeeds as of many, but of one, and to thy ſeed which is Chriſt," Gal. iii. 16.

While the apoſtle here ſhews that the covenant was confirmed of God in Chriſt, and pointedly alluded to him, he by no means affirms that it did not reſpect Abraham's natural offſpring. This was expreſsly declared in the covenant, "I will eſtabliſh my covenant between me and thee, and

thy ſeed after thee *in their generations*, for an everlaſting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy ſeed after thee," Gen. xvii. 7. By comparing this paſſage with theſe words of the apoſtle, we learn, 1*ſt*, That the bleſſings of the covenant were promiſed to the natural ſeed of Abraham. 2*dly*, That theſe were not promiſed to all the natural ſeed, but to thoſe who were Chriſt's*. The hiſtory of the Jews illuſtrates this. Many ſhewed that they were not the children of Abraham, but in every age there was a remnant of his natural ſeed. 3*dly*, That the bleſſings of the covenant were not to be confined to the natural ſeed of Abraham, but to extend to all believers who, by union with Chriſt, (who is eminently Abraham's ſeed) were to become the children of Abraham, Gal. iii. 29. Thus the Scripture foreſaw that God would juſtify the heathen through faith, Gal. iii. 8. By the preaching of the apoſtles, and the Gentiles receiving repentance unto life, the myſtery which had been hidden from the ſons of men was at length revealed, that the Gentiles ſhould be fellow-heirs of the ſame body, and partakers of his promiſe in Chriſt by the goſpel, Eph. iii. 6. This clearly demonſtrates the ſpiritual nature of the covenant made with Abraham. The inheritance which the Gentiles were jointly to inherit with the fleſhly ſeed, was doubtleſs the heavenly Canaan. The one were the natural

* *Chriſt* is ſometimes uſed in Scripture to ſignify his people, who are his body, 1 Cor. xii. 12. 27. Eph. iv. 16.

branches of the olive tree, and the other grafted in contrary to nature, for with God nothing is impoſſible. He is able of the ſtones to raiſe up children to Abraham. All ſpiritual bleſſings were, if we may ſo ſpeak, excluſively entailed on his family, and it is only in virtue of their becoming members of it that the Gentiles receive theſe bleſſings.

Some allege that the covenant was of a mixed nature, aſſuring Abraham that his ſeed by Iſaac ſhould inherit the land of Canaan, while his ſpiritual ſeed ſhould obtain the heavenly inheritance. But this is not the caſe, elſe the law made the promiſe of none effect (Gal. iii. 17.) to ſuch of the fleſhly ſeed as fell in the wilderneſs for diſobedience, and breaking the Sinai covenant, and thus in direct oppoſition to the declaration of the Holy Ghoſt, the law was againſt the promiſes of God, Gal. iii. 21. In this caſe alſo, the grand objection of the Antipædobaptiſts will meet them in all its force *; for if the land of Canaan was

* An argument much urged by them is, that if ſpiritual bleſſings were promiſed to the fleſhly ſeed of Abraham, *all* the fleſhly ſeed muſt obtain theſe. The apoſtle however aſſerts, that this was not the intention of God, "For they are not all Iſrael that are of Iſrael; neither becauſe they are the ſeed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Iſrael ſhall thy ſeed be called; that is, they which are the children of the fleſh, theſe are not the children of God; but the children of the promiſe are accounted for the ſeed," Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. Here we are informed, that it was never God's intention that *all* the children of Abraham were to be bleſſed with him; but nothing can be

promiſed to the ſeed of Iſaac, how came it that nearly five hundred years elapſed before any of them obtained it?

That the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant ordered in all things, and ſure, is manifeſt. It is oppoſed to the law, and called the covenant that was confirmed in Chriſt *, Gal. iii. 17. It is called the goſpel, Gal. iii. 18.; and the Holy Ghoſt declares, that the oath whereby that covenant was confirmed, Gen. xxii. 16,—18. was deſigned to give believers of the goſpel ſtrong conſolation, Heb. vi. 18.

If it be aſked why ſpiritual bleſſings were promiſed in language denoting temporal proſperity, the anſwer is obvious. From the fall until Chriſt, the promiſes of ſpiritual bleſſings were conveyed in parables. Life and immortality were *brought to light* by Jeſus Chriſt. Even during his perſonal miniſtry, he was pleaſed to teach chiefly in parables. It was not till his reſurrection that he ſhewed even his diſciples plainly without a veil the doctrines of God, John xvi. 25. and then by opening their underſtandings to underſtand the Scriptures, he qualified

more contrary to the apoſtle's meaning than the view which ſome take of this paſſage, that none of Abraham's fleſhly ſeed, as ſuch, were bleſſed with ſpiritual bleſſings. Iſaac was as truly a child of the fleſh as Iſhmael, although he was alſo a child of promiſe. God thus taught Iſrael not to glory in their relation to Abraham. The true Iſrael was never born *merely* of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man.

* Compare this paſſage with Eph. iii. 6.

them for explaining all the parables of the Old Teſtament, Mark iv. 13.

Many inſtances might be given of this manner of teaching by carnal images, which chiefly refer to ſpiritual things. Thus Chriſt, by death, deſtroying the devil, was promiſed, Gen. iii. 15. under the figure of the ſeed of the woman bruiſing the head of the ſerpent. So alſo the covenant of royalty made with David, which the Holy Ghoſt expreſsly applies to Chriſt*. This was all David's ſalvation, and all his deſire, at a time when earthly grandeur for children would have been diſregarded, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. with Iſaiah v. 3. Should any doubt remain as to the ſenſe in which David underſtood theſe promiſes, the Holy Ghoſt informs us, that, being a prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit on his throne, he ſeeing this before, ſpake of the reſurrection of Chriſt, Acts ii. 30, 31. In like manner, the promiſe of the land of Canaan to Abraham was but a ſhadow of the true accompliſhment to the heirs of promiſe in the gift of the heavenly inheritance, juſt as Solomon's grandeur was a typical fulfilment and pledge of the promiſe to David above mentioned. That Abraham underſtood the inheritance to be ſpiritual, is manifeſt; for he was in nowiſe diſappointed that he remained in the land of promiſe

* Compare 1 Chron. xvii. 11,—14. with Heb. i. 5. See alſo Pſal. lxxxix 20,—37.

as a ſojourner, dwelling in tents, looking for a city which hath foundations whoſe builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 9, 10. By confeſſing himſelf a ſtranger and pilgrim on earth, he plainly declared that he deſired a better, that is a heavenly country, Heb. xi. 13,—16.

Not only Abraham, but all the children of God, in every age, underſtood the promiſes to be ſpiritual. Not only did Abel, Noah, Abraham, &c. die in faith, not having obtained the promiſes, Heb. xi. 13. but all thoſe recorded in the xith chapter of Hebrews, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promiſe, ver. 39. although many of them inherited the land of Canaan, and ſhared in the greateſt *temporal* proſperity which God beſtowed on Iſrael. The *reſurrection of the dead* was the hope of Iſrael, Acts xxviii. 20. This was the promiſe made of God unto the fathers, unto which promiſe the twelve tribes, inſtantly ſerving God day and night, hoped to come; for which hope's ſake, ſays Paul, I am accuſed of the Jews, Acts xxvi. 6, 7. with xxiii. 6. Hence the apoſtle proclaims to the Jews at Antioch, the glad tidings of the accompliſhment of the promiſe which was made unto the fathers, in the reſurrection of Chriſt, the firſt fruits of thoſe who ſlept, Acts xiii. 32, 33. This promiſe was certainly none other than "the covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Iſaac, and confirmed the ſame unto Jacob for a law, and to Iſrael for an everlaſting covenant,"

Pſal. cv. 9, 10.; and this eſtabliſhes the view we have taken of the ſpiritual nature of the inheritance promiſed to Abraham and his ſeed. Indeed if this be not admitted, it is impoſſible to account for the general belief of the reſurrection in Iſrael *. It would appear that the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection, fell into the ſame miſtake with thoſe who underſtand the inheritance promiſed to Abraham to be of an earthly nature.

If any are ſtill uncertain as to the nature of the inheritance, let them attend to the declaration of the Holy Ghoſt, that "it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promiſe might be ſure to all the ſeed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that alſo which is of the faith of Abraham," Rom. iv. 16. Now ſurely this muſt reſpect the heavenly inheritance, for believers, as ſuch, are not taught to expect the poſſeſſion of the earthly Canaan †.

Thus we have ſeen that Abraham was juſtified

* Some, the apoſtle tells us, accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection, Heb. xi. 35. This may be illuſtrated by what is recorded by the author of the book of Maccabees. He informs us, that when king Antiochus had put to death ſix brethren (for not eating ſwine's fleſh), while their mother encouraged them to ſuffer by the hope of the reſurrection, 2 Mac. vii. 23. the ſeventh ſaid, "Our brethren, who now have ſuffered a ſhort pain, are dead under *God's covenant of everlaſting life*," ver. 36.

† Believers are taught in the New Teſtament to expect the reward of the *inheritance*, Col. iii. 24. alluding to the former promiſes.

by faith, and we know that his juſtification is the pattern and pledge of the juſtification of all who believe, Rom iv. 2, 3. 5.; that the covenant made with him was in fact the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God; and that, though agreeably to the nature of God's dealings with man in former ages he ſpake to Abraham in parables, yet Abraham underſtood that by the land of Canaan was ſignified the heavenly country.

To this covenant God attached a viſible ſign, and this was a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumciſed, Rom. iv. 11. God hereby declared to Abraham his acceptance of him through faith. But he alſo directed this ſign to be given to all the children of Abraham. It was ſtill the ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith, whatever might be the character of the child. It was ſo to Iſaac, and not leſs ſo to Iſhmael. It did not ſignify to either, that they were, or ſhould be, believers, but it was a pledge that, partaking of Abraham's faith, they ſhould in like manner be accepted of God, and be acknowledged as the children of Abraham. If they did not believe, their circumciſion * became uncircumciſion, and, like every privilege which men enjoy, if abuſed, it aggravated their

* Much weight is attached by Antipædobaptiſts to circumciſion leaving a viſible mark, which baptiſm does not. But that mark could never lead the mind to the truth which it ſignified, without being explained; and although no mark is left in baptiſm, it is as capable of being explained to children as the other

condemnation. Accordingly when Iſhmael, by mocking Iſaac, manifeſted his unbelief, he was caſt out of the houſehold of faith. Not only Abraham's children, but thoſe born in his houſe, were to be circumciſed. His houſehold was the true church of God, and none were to remain in it but the worſhippers of the true God.

Many have been led to miſtake the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, by confounding it with that made at Sinai 430 years afterwards. But although the latter was ſubſervient to the former, they were perfectly diſtinct. The church was put under the elements of this world, Col. ii. 20. as under a ſchool-maſter, until Chriſt, the great object of faith, ſhould come. But even under that diſpenſation, all who did not, by attending to the ordinances of God, profeſs the faith of Abraham, were to be cut off from the people of Iſrael; and when Chriſt, the great object of Abraham's faith, came, all who did not, by receiving him, profeſs the faith of Abraham, were caſt out, and they became *the conciſion*, Phil. iii. 2. while believers are *the circumciſion*.

It is obvious then, that circumciſion, the ſeal of the everlaſting covenant, was adminiſtered to the children of Abraham *as ſuch*; for Iſhmael, as well as Iſaac, was circumciſed, and it will be admitted, that he neither had any title to Canaan, nor was Chriſt to deſcend from him. It is alſo evident that Abraham's children enjoyed many

ſpiritual privileges above others *. Many indeed appear to have truſted in their deſcent from Abraham, and thus perverted the mercy and goodneſs of God. Hence they could not bear an intimation that they were equally under condemnation with the Gentiles, and immediately objected, "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumciſion?" To this the apoſtle replies, "Much every way; chiefly, that unto them were committed the oracles of God; for what if ſome did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faithfulneſs of God of none effect?" No; he was true to his promiſe to Abraham, his friend. He diſtinguiſhed his ſeed above all others, and made the privileges which they enjoyed effectual to the eternal ſalvation of many in every age †.

God plainly taught the poſterity of Abraham, that unleſs they were true children of Abraham, reſembling their father in faith, their deſcent or circumciſion would profit them nothing. This

* This was common to all Abraham's children. Iſhmael remained a member of his family till he apoſtatized. The ſame is true of Eſau, Heb. xii. 16, 17.

† Had circumciſion, as ſome imagine, been a ſeal of temporal bleſſings, it is ſtrange the apoſtle did not undeceive the Jews at once, by telling them ſo. But on the contrary, he anſwers their objection, by ſhewing that Iſrael always enjoyed ſpiritual bleſſings, although ſome ultimately received no benefit therefrom. Many err, by not diſtinguiſhing between God's beſtowing ſpiritual bleſſings, and rendering them effectual. The former was the caſe as to all Iſrael after the fleſh, the latter to the election of grace.

was clearly manifeſted by rejecting and caſting out Iſhmael and Eſau, and by the deſtruction of thoſe in the wilderneſs who believed not God, and truſted not in his ſalvation. They fell as a warning to unbelievers in every age, and after ſentence was paſſed upon them, their children were not circumciſed, Joſh. v. 5, 6. Having practically renounced the faith of Abraham, and being conſequently excluded from the inheritance, they could not enter in becauſe of unbelief, Heb. iii. 19.

When the goſpel began to be preached, it was to the Jew *firſt*. Our Lord confined his miniſtry to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael, and it was *neceſſary* that the word of God ſhould firſt be ſpoken to them, wherever they were ſcattered, Acts iii. 26. and xiii. 46. that the faithfulneſs of God to his promiſes might appear. Peter, addreſſing unbelieving Jews, ſays, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, ſaying to Abraham, And in thy ſeed ſhall all the families of the earth be bleſſed," Acts iii. 25. and from this conſideration urges them to repentance.

By the preaching of the goſpel the Lord gathered in many thouſands of Iſrael after the fleſh. Theſe were a kind of firſt-fruits, affording a pledge of the mercy he would afterwards ſhew the nation, James i. 18. with Rom. xi. 16. and we are aſſured in the moſt poſitive terms, both in the Old and New Teſtament, that although the natural

branches of the olive-tree are broken off through unbelief, they ſhall be grafted in again; that although Iſrael has ſtumbled, they have not fallen for ever; that they are beloved for their fathers ſakes; that if the root be holy, ſo are the branches; and that at laſt all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved, Rom. xi.

All muſt allow that ſpiritual bleſſings, and even eternal ſalvation, are here promiſed to the ſeed of Abraham, *as ſuch.* If, then, there were ſpecial promiſes to the ſeed of Abraham, the ſame promiſes muſt now be in force to the Gentiles, for the bleſſing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles, and the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This is plainly intimated by Peter to the Jews, when he ſays, "The promiſe is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, (the Gentiles, Eph. ii. 17.) even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call," Acts ii. 39.

Jeſus changed the outward ſign of the covenant, and ſubſtituted baptiſm for circumciſion, which is more agreeable to the New Teſtament diſpenſation. In like manner he ſubſtituted the firſt for the ſeventh day of the week. The ſanctification of the firſt day of the week ſtands upon the ſame footing with infant baptiſm, and conſequently ſome Antipædobaptiſts reject both; indeed ſuch are moſt conſiſtent*. That baptiſm now holds the

* We have poſitive example for the churches meeting on the firſt day of the week, and conſequently for the ſanctification of a part of that day; but it is neceſſary to recur to the Old Teſta-

ſame place with circumciſion, is evident from Gal. iii. 27, 28, 29. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus. And if ye be Chriſt's, then are ye Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe *." They both repreſent the circumciſion of the heart, Rom. ii. 28, 29. with 1 Pet. iii. 21. the putting away the filth of the fleſh, the putting off the old, and putting on the new man; both, therefore, figuratively repreſent our ſalvation, although they differ according to the genius of the Old and New Teſtament diſpenſations. The one points out the neceſſity of God cutting off the foreſkin of the heart, the other the neceſſity of the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, Tit. iii. 5. Circumciſion not only repreſented the circumciſion of the heart, but *His* coming in the fleſh, by the knowledge of whom the love of God is ſhed abroad in the heart. In like

ment to eſtabliſh the obligation of ſetting the whole of it apart from ſecular employments.

* Here the apoſtle expreſsly terms believers, Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe, which clearly proves, 1. That the covenant with Abraham is ſtill in force; 2. That the promiſe was not of a temporal, but an eternal inheritance: 3. That the Gentiles obtain the inheritance by becoming children of Abraham. It is alſo evident that baptiſm is here ſpoken of as the viſible ſign of our being Abraham's ſeed, juſt as circumciſion was of old, for without circumciſion no child of Abraham had any thing to expect from God, Gen. xvii. 14.

manner, baptiſm not only repreſents the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, but alſo that event which is the foundation of our love to him, 1 John iii. 16. Thus we are buried with him by baptiſm into death; our crucifixion to the world is thus profeſſed and ſealed. Baptiſm is expreſsly called the circumciſion of Chriſt, Col. ii. 11.

If children were formerly intereſted in the covenant of grace; if they actually enjoyed ſpiritual bleſſings of old, in virtue of their carnal deſcent; and if the ſeal of the covenant was to be adminiſtered to them; if the covenant with Abraham be ſtill in force, and if in virtue of it his ſeed ſhall yet be gathered in, Rom. xi.; if believing Gentiles are now his children—it remains for thoſe who repreſent their offspring as excluded, to ſhew by whoſe authority this has taken place. They muſt inform us where God has deprived his people of this high privilege and comfort in regard to their children. If they ſhould enquire how we come to extend it to female children, for whom the ſeal of the covenant was not formerly appointed, we reply, that God has extended it by informing us that the diſtinction between male and female is now at an end Gal. iii. 28.; and that both men and women were baptized by the apoſtles, Acts vii. 12.* It appears, then, that in virtue of the

* Some have expreſſed ſurpriſe that children are not alſo mentioned here, but men and women include the whole human race; thus we often read of a man-child, and our Lord ſpeaks of a *man* being born, John xvi. 21.

divine commandment to Abraham, every believer is bound to have his children baptized. This is our *explicit warrant;* for the commandments of God never wax old, and none can ſhew that this was ever repealed. If Antipædobaptiſts object to our going back to the Old Teſtament, we are not careful to anſwer them, until they can ſhew us that the apoſtle was wrong in doing ſo to prove juſtification by faith alone, and other things which might be ſpecified.

That children enjoy ſpiritual bleſſings in virtue of their connection with godly parents, is evident from the whole of Scripture. The deſcendents of Cain were rejected for the ſin of their parent, and are called the daughters of men, to diſtinguiſh them from Seth's poſterity, called the ſons of God, Gen. vi. 2. It was their mingling together which brought the flood upon the world. When the Lord was about to deſtroy the world, Noah found grace in the ſight of God, and his children, in virtue of their relation to him, were ſaved in the ark. The apoſtle Peter informs us, that baptiſm is the antitype of this ſalvation, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Ham's children were afterwards rejected for *his* wickedneſs, and while the poſterity of Shem and Japhet have enjoyed many ſpiritual bleſſings, and thouſands of them have been made partakers of faith in Chriſt, theſe have heard but little of the joyful ſound. Words cannot be more expreſs on this ſubject than thoſe of Moſes. After ſetting before Iſrael the puniſhment which would

come upon them for disobedience, he adds, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, *and the heart of thy seed*, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, Deut. xxx. 6.* That God did not intend to alter this constitution under the gospel, appears not only from the many promises to his people concerning their offspring, in those prophecies which treat of the times of the gospel, but from his expressly characterizing the new covenant as for the good of his people, and *their children after them*, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Jesus explains this when he says, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven †. Accordingly the language of the apostles clearly marks the connection which subsisted under the New Testament between parents and children. Believe, said

* Antipædobaptists must admit this to be an express promise to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of Israel. Would they approve of a Jew referring to this, and saying, 'God has promised this, and therefore it must be fulfilled to *all* the seed of Israel? I may therefore live as I please.' But do not they speak in the same manner when they affirm, that if the promise of God to be a God to Abraham and his seed, be really intended for believers of every nation, then *all* the children of believers must be saved?

† It is alleged that Jesus did not baptize these children. True; for he had not at this time instituted baptism. But his words very strongly confirm the truth, that children, who had in every age been partakers of spiritual blessings with their parents, were not now to be rejected and deprived of the seal of their interest in the covenant to which they were admitted before the law, and from which privilege its abolition, and the commencement of the kingdom of God, was not to exclude them.

they, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and *thy houſe*. Salvation came to that houſe where the parents believed. This is inexplicable on the Antipædobaptiſt ſyſtem. The commiſſion was to preach the goſpel to *every creature*; and ſurely if no more was meant than that the houſehold ſhould be ſaved upon believing, ſuch a limitation of the goſpel is utterly unaccountable. It is well to remember that the Scripture cannot be broken; no improper expreſſions are to be found in it.

The great objection made againſt any ſpecial promiſe of ſpiritual bleſſings to the children of believers is, that they do not all receive ſpecial grace. This very objection is ſtated and anſwered by the apoſtle. "What if ſome did not believe, ſhall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?" No promiſes are made to believers themſelves of eternal happineſs, except in as much as they abide in Chriſt's word. "The juſt ſhall live by faith, but if *he* draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him." By means of the promiſes and threatenings, Chriſt's ſheep are brought in, and kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation. So it is with the children of believers. If they believe not what is ſignified by baptiſm, their deſcent will profit them no more than that of the Iſraelites, who could not enter Canaan becauſe of unbelief, and whoſe carcaſes fell in the wilderneſs, or than the righteouſneſs of the righteous, if he commit iniquity, Ezek. xxxiii. 13. This is exactly the

apoſtle's argument when he ſays, "Circumciſion verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumciſion is made uncircumciſion," Rom. ii. 25.

Such, indeed, has always been God's manner of dealing with men. "At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it: If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them," Jer. xviii. 7,—10. Here are both promiſes and threatenings; faith ſecures the accompliſhment of the one, and averts the accompliſhment of the other. So it was with Nineveh; God commanded judgment to be denounced againſt the city: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh ſhall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth, from the greateſt of them even to the leaſt of them," Jonah iii. 5. "And God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not," ver. 10. So alſo it was with Eli: "Wherefore the Lord God of Iſrael ſaith, I ſaid indeed that thy houſe, and the houſe of thy father, ſhould

walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. When the apostle assures the Corinthians, that God is faithful, who would not suffer them to be tempted above what they were able to bear, surely it is implied, that this was to be the case only while they lived by faith, and not that they should be kept from falling at all events. So it is with all the promises of eternal life, "if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled." Thus also do the promises of the heavenly inheritance run to the children of believers; and, in like manner, a connection subsists between their training up their children properly, and their being partakers of like precious faith. Believers, then, had need to beware how they trifle with the special promises to their seed, and to enquire, if their children prove reprobates, whether it has not arisen from their own unbelief. This may be the case although they practise infant baptism.

On the whole, it appears that infant baptism is an ordinance of God, and those who deny it, and even ridicule it, because the subjects cannot at the time understand it, should remember that their ridicule equally applies to circumcision, which they admit to be an ordinance of God. Granting, for a moment, that this was a seal of temporal blessings, an infant can understand these as little as

ſpiritual privileges, and therefore, according to them, it was abſurd.

Although circumciſion was not of Moſes, but of the fathers, he enjoined it on the children of Iſrael, Lev. xii. 3. When we conſider the typical nature of that diſpenſation, it might well have ſurpriſed us if there had been nothing correſponding thereto under the goſpel. The apoſtle ſhews, that even the precept of not muzzling the ox which treadeth out the corn, had an eſpecial reference to the ſupport of preachers of the goſpel, 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10.; and in the ſame chapter he ſhews how the Lord's ordinance, that thoſe who preach the goſpel ſhould live by the goſpel, correſponds with thoſe who were at the altar being partakers with the altar. In theſe inſtances the apoſtle heſitates not to go back to the Old Teſtament, and to confirm what he ſays by the ancient ordinances of God.

The practice of the churches has juſt been what we might expect. We read of infant baptiſm almoſt from the earlieſt times. Pelagius, who flouriſhed in the fifth century, and who denied original ſin, was accuſed of denying the propriety of infant baptiſm: this he diſclaimed, declaring that he had never heard of any heretics who did ſo.

Juſtin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the apoſtles, ſpeaks of baptiſm as being to Chriſtians in the place of circumciſion; and in his apology, he ſays, 'Several perſons among us of ſixty or

ſeventy years old were diſciples to Chriſt in or from their childhood.' He here uſes the ſame word employed by Chriſt, Matt. xviii. 19. diſciple all nations. Irenæus, who lived very near the apoſtles' times, ſpeaks of infants being regenerated to God. Clemens Alexandrinus, who lived about the ſame time as Irenæus, ſays, that regeneration is the name of baptiſm, and indeed it was commonly uſed by the fathers, as they are called, in this ſenſe.

Origen ſpeaks expreſsly and repeatedly of infant baptiſm, and connects the ordinance with original ſin. He declares that the church had, from the apoſtles' time, an order to baptiſe infants. He was born little more than eighty years after the apoſtles. His father ſuffered martyrdom, and Euſebius informs us that his forefathers had been Chriſtians for ſeveral generations. In the time of Cyprian, who was choſen biſhop of Carthage in the year 248, a council of ſixty-ſix biſhops met to conſider whether baptiſm ſhould be adminiſtered immediately after birth, or be deferred till the eighth day. They determined that it ought not to be delayed, but none ſuggeſted that baptiſm ſhould not be adminiſtered to infants at all*.

* See Wall's Hiſtory of Infant Baptiſm.—It is true that in the time of Cyprian it appears that the bread and wine uſed in the Lord's ſupper were given to infants; but this was much more likely to be ſuperadded to baptiſm, than that both ſhould be human devices. Much has been ſaid of Jewiſh children eating the paſſover, but of this there is no proof; the contrary is intimated by Moſes. "When a ſtranger ſhall ſojourn with thee, and will

Although children are unconſcious of what is taking place in baptiſm, yet the ordinance being afterwards explained to them, may, by the bleſſing of God, be very uſeful. Parents ought, when they come to a proper age, to ſet before them the nature of baptiſm, and to warn them, that their having been partakers of it will not avail, unleſs they poſſeſs the faith of their parents; that the ſign, without the thing ſignified, will not profit; and that if, like Eſau, they deſpiſe the goſpel, like him they muſt be aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael. When parents obſerve the ordinance in faith, it will be a great encouragement to them to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The promiſe of God is intended to promote this, not to render it unneceſſary. It may be ſaid, if God has promiſed, it muſt take place. It will be admitted that God did promiſe to Abraham to be the God of his ſeed, and yet Abraham's inſtructing his houſehold is mentioned as eſſential to the accompliſhment of the promiſe: "I know him," ſaid God, "that he will com-

keep the paſſover to the Lord, let all his males be circumciſed, and then let *him* come near and keep it." At all events, circumciſion and the paſſover were completely different. The one was given to Abraham as the ſeal of the covenant, and was, by divine command, to be adminiſtered to infants. Baptiſm, we have ſeen, came in the place of this. No one could partake of the paſſover, without being acquainted with the deliverance from Egypt, which infants could not; but their infancy was no objection to their receiving the ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith, which did not depend on their underſtanding.

mand his children, and his houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; *that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him*," Gen. xviii. 19.

Baptiſm is calculated to impreſs us with a lively ſenſe of the original corruption of our nature, and the neceſſity of regeneration by the Spirit, given through the death and reſurrection of Chriſt. It ought to be adminiſtered only to the children of believers, who are obeying, ſo far as they have opportunity, all Chriſt's commandments. It is very unwarrantable and injurious to men, to make an exception in favour of thoſe who ſtatedly hear the goſpel. There are but two characters in the world, the righteous and the wicked. The former are believers, and ſhew their love to Chriſt by keeping his commandments. To the latter he ſays, "What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldeſt take my covenant in thy mouth?" Such only profane the ordinance of baptiſm. It is cruel in thoſe who ought to know better, to be inſtrumental in deluding them. What are they doing when preſenting their children? Are they obeying the commandment of Chriſt? No; they are rebels againſt his government. They do not chuſe to have him to reign over them. The Lord declares that it is the ſpirit which quickeneth, the fleſh profiteth nothing; but, alas, they are carnal. The things of the Spi-

rit are fooliſhneſs to them; they diſcern not the nature of the Lord's ordinances, but vainly ſeek, by attending to them, to work out a righteouſneſs for themſelves or their children *.

Some wiſh to have their children baptized, who ſay they are too unworthy to partake of the Lord's ſupper. In that caſe, they are equally unworthy of baptiſm for their children. The one ordinance is as holy as the other. This way of talking ſhews great ignorance of the goſpel. Chriſt came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance; and ſuch erroneous views ſhould not be encouraged.

Some of the Lord's people it may be, from miſtaken views, may neglect the obſervance of the Lord's ſupper, while they deſire baptiſm for their children. They ought to be otherwiſe inſtructed, and informed that the obſervance or omiſſion of any of Chriſt's ordinances is not optional; his ſervants are bound to obey them all, on pain of his diſpleaſure.

* The indiſcriminate adminiſtration of this ordinance to the children of all who call themſelves Chriſtians, not only tends to lull the careleſs aſleep, but to deſtroy the foundation of infant baptiſm altogether. It can never be pretended that any of the Gentiles are Abraham's children, but thoſe who are Chriſt's; and conſequently others on whom the bleſſing of Abraham has not come have no ſhare in the privileges of his family. Some, to free themſelves from guilt, while indiſcriminately adminiſtering baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, ſay, they receive men on a profeſſion of Chriſtianity; but what is a profeſſion of that, or of any thing elſe, unleſs we have ſufficient grounds to believe it ſincere?

One is much inclined to believe, when a perſon deſires baptiſm for his children, and yet does not obſerve the ordinance of the ſupper, that he is influenced more by the opinion of the world than by regard to the authority of Chriſt. A perſon may, in this country, neglect the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper without being ſingular, but were he to allow his children to remain unbaptized, it would be thought very ſhocking and heatheniſh.

Although the children of the members cannot be conſidered as members of a church, being incapable of fulfilling the duties of that relation, they ought to be the ſubjects of much prayer in the churches; and in proportion as the ordinance of infant baptiſm is underſtood, and the ordinance obſerved in faith, this will be the caſe.

Reſpecting the mode of adminiſtering baptiſm, ſome have affirmed that βαπτω and βαπτιζω ſignify only *to dip*, or *plunge*. They add that baptiſm repreſents our being planted in the likeneſs of Chriſt's death, and riſing to walk with him in newneſs of life; and that this can only be repreſented by immerſion in water. To ſupport this, they allege Rom. vi. 4. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm unto death; that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life. Alſo Col. ii. 12. "Buried with him in baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raiſed him from the dead."

That βαπτω and βαπτιζω do not always ſignify *to dip*, appears from the manner in which theſe words are uſed in the Scriptures. Βαπτισμος is uſed Heb. ix. 10. for the waſhings under the law, which in general were not by dipping. The Phariſee wondered that our Lord had not waſhed, βαπτισθη, before dinner, Luke xi. 38. Βαπτισμος is alſo applied to tables, Mark vii. 4. which we cannot ſuppoſe to have been immerſed in water. Baptiſm with water repreſents the baptiſm of the Holy Ghoſt, John iii. 5. and as the Holy Ghoſt is ſaid to be *poured out*, the pouring out of water more ſtrikingly reſembles it. Of this we have a noted example in Cornelius and his friends. The brethren were aſtoniſhed that upon the Gentiles the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, εκκεχυται, was poured out, Acts x. 45. This immediately reminded Peter of the Lord's promiſe to *baptiſe* with the Holy Ghoſt, and thus we have a ſtriking evidence of βαπτιζω being uſed to ſignify *pouring out*, which is of itſelf ſufficient to ſhew that the mode of baptiſm cannot be alleged to be immerſion, from the term employed.

As to Romans vi. and Col. ii. it is obſerved that they allude to the ſpiritual baptiſm, and that, as the expreſſion, *being crucified with Chriſt*, which occurs in the ſame place, has no alluſion to any practice in baptiſm, there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe that being buried with him alludes to any particular mode. The great difference here is, whether water ſhould be applied to the body, or the body

to water. The former appears more conformable to the thing ſignified, our being baptized by one ſpirit into the one body of Chriſt *.

* 'I muſt ſay, and will make it good,' (ſays Dr Owen) 'that no honeſt man who underſtands the Greek tongue, can deny the word to ſignify *to waſh*, as well as *to dip*.——The apoſtle, Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. is dehorting from ſin, exhorting to holineſs and new obedience, and gives this argument from the neceſſity of it, and our ability for it, both taken from our initiation into the virtue of the death and life of Chriſt expreſſed in our baptiſm; that by virtue of the death and burial of Chriſt, we ſhould be dead unto ſin, ſin being ſlain thereby; and by virtue of the reſurrection of Chriſt, we ſhould be quickened unto newneſs of life, as Peter declares, 1 Pet iii. 21. Our being *buried* with him, and our being planted together into the likeneſs of his death, and likeneſs of his reſurrection, is the ſame with our old man being crucified with him, ver. 6. and the deſtroying of the body of ſin, and our being raiſed from the dead with him, which is all that is intended in this place.

'There is not one word, nor one expreſſion, that mentions any reſemblance between dipping under water, and the death and burial of Chriſt, not one word that mentions a reſemblance between our riſing out of the water and the reſurrection of Chriſt. Our being buried with him by baptiſm into death, ver. 4. is our being planted together in the likeneſs of his death, ver. 5. Our being planted together in the likeneſs of his death, is not our being dipped under water, but the crucifying of the old man, ver. 6. Our being raiſed up with Chriſt from the dead, is not our riſing from under the water, but our walking in newneſs of life, ver. 4. by virtue of the reſurrection of Chriſt, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

'That baptiſm is not a ſign of the death, burial, and reſurrection of Chriſt, is clear from hence; becauſe an inſtituted ſign is a ſign of goſpel grace participated, or to be participated. If dipping be a ſign of the burial of Chriſt, it is not a ſign of a goſpel grace participated; for it may be where there is none, nor any exhibited.

'For the *major*; if all goſpel ordinances are ſigns and expreſ-

CHAPTER X.

OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

WE have now considered the various ordinances appointed by Christ for the edification of Christian churches. If Christians were what they ought to be; if they always held fast the faith, and were free from sin; and if they could at all

sions of the communication of the grace of Christ, then baptism is so; but this is the end of all gospel ordinances, or else they have some other end, or are vain and empty shews.

'The same individual sign cannot be instituted to signify things of several natures. But the outward burial of Christ, and a participation of the virtue of Christ's death and burial, are things of a divers nature, and therefore are not signified by one sign.

'That interpretation, which would enervate the apostle's argument and design, our comfort and duty, is not to be admitted. But this interpretation, that baptism is mentioned here as the sign of Christ's burial, would enervate the apostle's argument and design, our comfort and duty. And therefore it is not to be admitted.

'The *minor* is thus proved; the argument and design of the apostle, as was before declared, is to exhort and encourage unto mortification of sin and new obedience, by virtue of power received from the death and life of Christ, whereof a pledge is given us in our baptism. But this is taken away by this interpretation; for we may be so buried with Christ, and planted into the death of Christ by dipping, and yet have no power derived from Christ for the crucifying of sin, and for the quickening of us to obedience.'—Dr Owen on Infant Baptism and Dipping.

times prevent falſe brethren from creeping in among them, the ordinance of diſcipline would be unneceſſary. But Chriſtians are renewed but in part. In many things they all offend. They are apt to be ſeduced from the path of duty, and having once fallen, they are in danger of growing worſe and worſe, and of making ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience.

Chriſt's ſheep, it is true, ſhall never periſh, nor ſhall any pluck them out of his hand; but they are preſerved by means, and one of the means he employs to effect his gracious intentions in regard to them, is directing them to aſſociate together. One great end of theſe aſſociations is, that they may watch over and admoniſh each other. By theſe mutual admonitions, Chriſtians are rouſed from the ſlumber into which they are prone to fall through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

Moſes was faithful in all God's houſe, for he punctually delivered the commandments of Jehovah, king of Iſrael. The worldly kingdom of Iſrael was a figure of the kingdom of God which they were taught to expect. This kingdom is now come, and a greater than Moſes has delivered laws for its government. The laws delivered to Iſrael were never intended to be obſerved, except by one nation. The laws of the kingdom of Chriſt were deſigned for thoſe gathered out of every tongue, kingdom and nation. The former were calculated for a community in one country; the latter for individuals in every

place. To the obſervance of the one, a particular form of civil polity was neceſſary. The other is independent of, and unaffected by any difference of external circumſtances. Temporal proſperity was promiſed to the due obſervance of the ſtatutes of the one, the other was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes. Iſrael was commanded to exterminate the nations in whoſe land they dwelt, unleſs they ſubmitted to them *; the diſciples of Jeſus are to follow peace with all men, and not to ſtrive even with the wicked.

Wherever the apoſtles preached with ſucceſs, they not only enjoined the obſervance of thoſe ordinances which we have already conſidered, but they appointed certain rules according to which the churches were to proceed in various circumſtances which they knew would occur. It was of the utmoſt importance that theſe rules ſhould be wiſe and proper; for on this, in a great meaſure, depended the recovery of backſliders, the exiſtence of harmony amongſt the members, their increaſe in knowledge, and eventually the propagation of the goſpel in the world. Men being brought to give glory to God, in a great meaſure depends on ſeeing the good works of thoſe who profeſs godlineſs and ſubjection to Chriſt, and in their union and co-operation in all religious obſervances.

While the apoſtles gloried in every convert to the faith, as an additional proof of the efficacy of

* See Deut. xx. 10,—18. &c.

the doctrine of the croſs, they knew that ſuch were ſtill prone to backſlide from God, and to return to the world from whence they had come out. They ſaw many inſtances of perſons turning their backs on Chriſt. It was the object of the rules they delivered to prevent this, to promote an increaſing ſuperiority to the world, and the moſt ſtedfaſt ſubmiſſion to the will of Chriſt.

Jeſus is repreſented, Rev. i. 13. as walking in the midſt of the churches, obſerving whether his laws are attended to; and we find him ſharply reproving the churches of Aſia for the exiſtence of various abuſes among them, ariſing from the neglect of theſe inſtitutions.

It is of the utmoſt importance, in attending to the laws of Chriſt which reſpect the diſcipline of Chriſtian ſocieties, to conſider the ſpirit as well as the letter of theſe laws. The object of diſcipline, when exerciſed according to the will of Chriſt, muſt always be the glory of God, the good of the church, and the good of the party. Theſe three are inſeparably connected, and we muſt never loſe ſight of any of them. If we do, we ſhall act from improper motives, and more harm than good will reſult from our diſcipline. Attention to theſe will guard us againſt two extremes into which churches are apt to fall—undue lenity, and unchriſtian ſeverity. It will alſo prevent us from acting with partiality, which can otherwiſe hardly be avoided. It is almoſt unneceſſary to obſerve that the diſcipline

appointed by Chriſt reſpects only the members of his churches. "I wrote to you in an epiſtle, not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then muſt ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with ſuch an one, no, not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them alſo that are without, do not ye judge them that are within?" 1 Cor. v. 9,—12.

We have ſeen that thoſe only of whom it is meet (juſt, δικαιον, Philip. i. 7.) for us to think that they have the Spirit of Chriſt, are to be united in church-fellowſhip. The declaration, that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, is once and again repeated, and the churches are expreſsly commanded to put away wicked perſons.

"Offences," ſaid Jeſus, "muſt come." An offence, in the New Teſtament, means a *ſtumbling-block* *. Whenever we act improperly, we caſt

* 'The word *offend* is uſed above thirty times in the eſtabliſhed tranſlation of the New Teſtament into Engliſh. The original word, σκανδαλιζω, is ſo tranſlated, and this is in a ſingle place, and in that only, rendered *make to offend*, viz. 1 Cor. viii. 10. In James ii. 10. and iii. 2. the word rendered *offend* is one, (πταω) which is elſewhere rendered *ſtumble*, Rom. xi. 11. and *fall*, 2 Pet. i. 10. Theſe are all the places where this word occurs. In one place, Acts xxv. 8. the word rendered *offend* is αμαρτανω, that which is uniformly tranſlated elſewhere in Scripture, *to ſin*, or *to treſpaſs*, &c.

a ſtumbling-block, or a ſnare, in the way of our brethren. Our Lord has delivered his will reſpecting diſcipline in very few words, which however are of univerſal application in every caſe which can occur. "Moreover, if thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven," Matt. xviii. 15,—18. This is a ſhort but comprehenſive rule. It is a general ſummary of our duty as church members in regard to diſcipline. All the directions given in the epiſtles

' To offend God, properly ſignifies to ſin againſt him, by breaking or violating his commandments, and thereby to diſpleaſe and provoke him to anger. In like manner, in the uſual acceptation of the words, *to offend a perſon*, whether believer or unbeliever, is to injure, diſpleaſe, or provoke him.

' But in no inſtance in the Engliſh New Teſtament doth the word *offend* ſignify this with reſpect to God, except in Acts xxv. 8. Jamesii. 10. and iii. 3. quoted above. *To offend*, on the contrary, *and to do iniquity*, are diſtinguiſhed from each other, Matt. xiii. 41. In no inſtance hath it this ſignification when it reſpects our brethren. It then denotes *to ſtumble* or *enſnare* them.' See Miſſ. Magazine for 1802, p. 145.

are evidently founded upon this. As the ſubject is ſo very ſimple, we ſhall conſider what our practice ought to be, occaſionally referring to ſome particular directions for the application of this precept.

Love is the only bond which knits together the members of a church of Chriſt. Remove this, and the union cannot ſubſiſt. It is alſo the ſpring which ſets all the wheels a-going, and when this is broken, all right movements ceaſe. We may form a ſociety connected by worldly intereſt, or influenced by external ties, and this may reſemble a church of Chriſt; but it is eſſentially different. It reſembles a church of Chriſt as a ſtatue does a man; at a diſtance they may be miſtaken, but when examined, the difference is manifeſt. As love is of ſuch eſſential importance in a church of Chriſt, we may be aſſured that Jeſus has uſed every precaution to preſerve it. Love is a tender plant. Jeſus places it in the hearts of all his people; but the heart of man is not its native ſoil. Hence its proneneſs to droop and die, and hence the neceſſity of the utmoſt watchfulneſs againſt every thing hoſtile to its growth and exiſtence.

Nothing tends more to deſtroy love, than unkindneſs in thoſe who are the objects of it. Where any thing of this ſort has taken place, the Lord has appointed that proper ſteps ſhould immediately be taken to prevent bad conſequences.

Our natural pride leads us, when we think our-

ſelves injured, to withdraw from the perſon who has done us wrong. No, ſays the Lord, he is thy brother. If we cannot conveniently withdraw from him altogether, we feel ourſelves diſpoſed to ſhew him by our conduct, that we reſent the ill-treatment we have met with; to behave to him with coldneſs and reſerve; or, at leaſt, while we profeſs to forgive him, to tell to others what he has done. This anſwers a double purpoſe. It gratifies our malice by expoſing him, and it feeds our pride by proclaiming our own ſuperior goodneſs. But if we will be Chriſt's ſervants, we muſt not make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof. We muſt neither allow the recollection of his conduct to fret in our own boſom, nor make it known even to our brethren. We muſt go and ſpeak to himſelf, expoſtulating with him as a brother on the impropriety of his conduct, ſhewing him wherein he has acted ſinfully, and thus teſtifying our affection for him. Were this rule more exactly followed, it would prevent much contention *.

But he may be under the influence of pride, or of ſome other evil paſſion. He will not confeſs his ſin. This tends farther to irritate us, and to ſhew the improper ſtate of his mind; we muſt not, therefore, let the matter reſt here, but, for his ſake as well as for our own, take with us one or

* More ſwellings and whiſperings ariſe in churches from the neglect of this rule, than from any thing elſe, perhaps more than from all other cauſes taken together.

two perſons more, belonging to the church, that their opinion may influence him, and that he may ingenuouſly acknowledge his error. It would have hurt his pride leſs to have confeſſed his fault at firſt, but his obſtinacy rendered this ſtep neceſſary.

He may ſtill remain obſtinate; he cannot ſee wherein he was wrong, although this be manifeſt to the brethren who were brought to converſe with him. This ſhews an unchriſtian ſtate of mind, and may even excite doubts whether he be at all under the influence of the truth. The offence muſt therefore be told to the church. Thoſe who accompanied the party offended when addreſſing him privately, and who are acquainted with the ſubject, muſt give their teſtimony; and thus in the mouth of two or three witneſſes, every word is eſtabliſhed. If it appear that the perſon complained of is in the wrong, he is to be admoniſhed and called to repentance; his impenitence and obſtinacy having converted a private into a public offence. If he is convinced of his guilt, he ought publicly to profeſs his ſorrow, ſo as to ſatisfy the church of the ſincerity of his repentance. He not only owes an acknowledgment to the injured individual, but to all his brethren, before whom he has ſet ſuch an example.

But if he ſtill perſiſt in vindicating his conduct, there is no higher tribunal on earth to which he is amenable. If he refuſe to hear the church, and they, after ſerious deliberation and prayer,

are fully ſatisfied that he is acting ſinfully, they are bound to put him away as one whoſe mind is not under ſubjection to the laws of Chriſt. He may ſay, indeed, how can I acknowledge my fault if I be not ſenſible of it? I cannot walk by the light of my brethren. The church ought to beware of giving a raſh judgment. They muſt not require their brother to ſubmit to *them*, nor muſt they exclude him becauſe he will not call them *Maſter*. They muſt point out from the word of God wherein he has acted improperly. The will of Chriſt, and not either their judgment or his, is the ſtandard.

It is true, they may miſapply the rules there delivered; but if they look to Chriſt for direction, and form a deliberate judgment, guarding againſt all prejudices and partiality, they muſt act upon it whether he be convinced or not. Should the caſe be complex and difficult, they ought deliberately to weigh every circumſtance, and to take into the account every alleviating conſideration. But if they are ſatisfied he is in the wrong, and if he continue to aſſert his integrity, the appeal lies to the Head of the church alone, and he will, in the day of his appearing, ratify every ſentence which they have paſſed according to his word. It may be a ſmall matter in the eyes of ſome to be excluded from a church, but if the church has acted properly, and if this ordinance, or ſome ſubſequent event, does not bring the offender to repentance and confeſſion of his

ſin, it will be no light matter to be caſt off in the great day, as a rebel againſt Jeſus Chriſt!

There is little danger of a church of Chriſt forming an erroneous judgment, or even of any conſiderable difference of opinion ariſing among them reſpecting any caſe, if they are duly ſenſible that the laws of Chriſt recorded in Scripture are the only ſtandard by which they are to judge the conduct of the members. If a perſon has not tranſgreſſed any of theſe, he cannot properly be the ſubject of diſcipline; if he has, he muſt be dealt with only as theſe laws direct.

Whenever we receive an injury, or take umbrage at the conduct of our brethren, as we value the authority of Jeſus, we muſt take the ſteps he has preſcribed. We are not, on the one hand, at liberty to allege that the treſpaſs was ſo ſmall it was unneceſſary to notice it; nor, on the other, that it was ſo great that we could not look on him as a brother. We are bound, in either caſe, for his benefit, as well as to prevent any diſguſt from lurking in our own minds, to go privately to him if the offence be committed in private. If it ſhould be of ſuch a nature as to lead us to doubt if he be a Chriſtian; if we are not ſatisfied with his acknowledgment, or have reaſon to think it is made merely to prevent the matter being ſpoken of, we ought to inform him that we are not ſatisfied, and that we muſt refer the affair to the judgment of ſome of

our brethren. Every ſtep ought to be taken with prayer for direction and ſucceſs. Our deſire ought to be that our brother ſhould be led to repentance, and there ought never to exiſt that irritation of mind which would lead us to wiſh that it may go farther, in order that he may be expoſed. If this be our temper, the Lord marks and condemns it.

What is ſaid of our brother *treſpaſſing againſt us*, applies to every part of his private conduct which may be improper, although we be not perſonally concerned. We muſt not ſay, Am I my brother's keeper? We muſt watch over one another, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt. We muſt not ſuffer ſin upon our brother. If to our knowledge he commit ſin, he treſpaſſes againſt us, he diſhonours our Maſter, and caſts a ſtumbling-block in our way. We muſt go and tell him, and not leave the matter till we are either ſatisfied that we were miſtaken, or have convinced him, or have laid the matter before the church.

By this mode of proceeding, improper members will be diſcovered, and if this law be properly obſerved, few hypocrites will long remain in a church. Where diſcipline is impartially adminiſtered, it will have a ſimilar effect with the ſalutary ſeverity exerciſed upon Ananias and Sapphira: "Of the reſt durſt no man join himſelf unto them; but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the

Lord, multitudes both of men and women," Acts v, 13. 14.

Thus far have we proceeded in considering the express command of the Lord Jesus. Various parts of the epistles shew that this was the conduct which the apostles enforced upon the churches. Besides private offences which may become public, there may be some offences in their own nature public. Such is the improper conduct of a member of a church known to the world, or to a number of the members. When a person professing godliness falls into sin, he casts a stumbling-block in the way of the world, tempting them to believe that the doctrine of Christ is not according to godliness, or that there is no truth in religion. Worldly men endeavour to quiet their consciences while living without God, and are therefore happy to hear of any instance of improper conduct in a Christian. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Christians are apt to be infected by bad example, and therefore the Lord has appointed that public notice be taken of a public offence. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear," 1 Tim. v. 20.* In a private matter between our brother and us, if he acknowledge his fault, we are bound to forgive him from our hearts, and not to expose him.

* It is indeed highly proper, and ought to be the case, that upon hearing of any public offence in a brother, we should converse with him upon it, and use every means to convince him of his sin; but the matter must not rest here.

But if he has ſinned in a more public manner, the church muſt deal with him. A private acknowledgment is not ſufficient. Indeed if he be duly ſenſible of his ſin, he will eſteem it a privilege and a duty publicly to acknowledge his ſorrow for it. He thus removes, ſo far as in his power, the aſperſion his conduct has caſt upon the goſpel. He alſo ſets before his brethren an example of cheerful ſubmiſſion to the laws of Chriſt.

Should a member, upon being dealt with and admoniſhed for a public offence, refuſe to hear the church, they muſt, as in the former caſe, withdraw from him, and not acknowledge him as a brother. But the church ought to be fully ſatisfied of the ſinfulneſs of his conduct, and ſhould conſider every alleviating circumſtance. They ſhould guard againſt undue ſeverity. A caſe of diſcipline, if not properly conducted, may degenerate into a private quarrel between the church and the individual. Each party has taken his ground, and neither will yield. While they are in ſuch a temper, no act of diſcipline can be conducted in obedience to the commandment of Chriſt, for the church in this caſe is jealous of its own authority, and not of the authority of Jeſus Chriſt.

It is abundantly evident, that no form of diſcipline, however ſcriptural, will make up for the want of real religion. Diſcipline, except in ſo far as exerciſed from regard to the authority of Chriſt, and with a view to promote his glory by increaſing the purity of the members of a church,

is a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing. It tends to excite wrath, ſtrife, diviſions, and every evil work.

In all caſes of diſcipline which may occur, it is of much importance to examine matters thoroughly, and to probe them to the bottom. We have much temptation to heal wounds ſlightly; to reſt ſatisfied with ſaving the credit of our diſcipline, and of our character as a Chriſtian church, while ſtill allowing ſome root of bitterneſs evidently to remain in the hearts of the members towards each other, which will afterwards ſpring up and trouble us. This ought never to be the caſe. We ought not to ſhrink from difficulties, but to meet them fairly, truſting in the grace and power of Jeſus. If we are acting agreeably to his will, he will countenance us. Difficulties may preſent themſelves; unpleaſant conſequences may be dreaded; but theſe, however formidable, muſt not lead us to depart from what Chriſt hath commanded. He knew the conſequences of obeying his precepts, and he has given us no diſpenſing power with regard to the leaſt of his ſtatutes.

When a member has acted improperly, and it is neceſſary to admoniſh him either in public or in private, it ought to be done with meekneſs and affection. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs; conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted," Gal. vi. 1. This is not inconſiſtent with the precept, "Rebuke them ſharply," Tit. i. 13. The circumſtances of the caſe will of

courſe direct as to the manner in which rebuke ſhould be adminiſtered. Public rebuke is very unpleaſant to fleſh and blood, but it muſt not be diſpenſed with when the offence is public. It is not only intended for the good of the individual but of others.

A perſon may be guilty of ſins which demand immediate excluſion. If his conduct has been ſuch as to convince us that he is a mere profeſſor, having a form of godlineſs without the power thereof, we are to turn away from him, 2 Tim. iii. 5.* Such was the deciſion of the apoſtle in regard to the inceſtuous perſon, 1 Cor. v. 13. Our Lord's commandment, (Matt. xviii.) that the church ſhould deal with a member to bring him to repentance, does not apply here. They are to call him to repentance by ſeparating from him. Care muſt be taken, however, that we do not form too haſty a judgment. The conduct of a believer who has fallen into ſin, is eſſentially different from that of a mere profeſſor. The one was overcome by temptation; the other was acting under the influence of ſin, which habitually reigns in him. They are therefore to be treated differently. Great care, and much dependence on God, is neceſſary when examining ſuch a caſe. The former conduct of the offender, the evidence he has given of devotedneſs to Chriſt, the aggravations or the alleviations of the offence, muſt all be taken into view. Every caſe will preſent certain circum-

* Some render τουτους αποστρεφου, *theſe turn away.* It is exactly the ſame thing whichever tranſlation we prefer.

ſtances, which will guide us in forming a judgment in regard to it.

It is a never-failing maxim in the diſcipline of the churches of Chriſt, that the good of the church and of the offender are always united. So far from doing an unconverted perſon an injury when we exclude him from a church, we do him a real ſervice. He is in a more hopeful ſituation after excluſion. His being inadvertently retained in the church, tended to quiet his conſcience. Putting him away is a probable, it is the inſtituted means of bringing him to repentance.

Much has been ſaid of the judgment of charity. All things ought to be done with charity; but *what is called* judging charitably, is often forming a judgment in direct oppoſition to evidence. Charity is love, αγαπη. We ought to love all men. Elihu gives us an example of the true ſpirit of charity in judgment, when he ſays to Job, "I deſire to juſtify thee," xxxiii. 32.—but he was compelled to blame him. Charity indeed thinketh no evil; but this, only when it ſees and hears of none. Charity is not blind and partial affection. We have a ſtriking inſtance of the violation of charity, in the ſuggeſtion of Satan that Job's religion was all hypocriſy, Job i. 9,—11. and ii. 4, 5. Here was harſh and unfavourable judgment, in direct oppoſition to external evidence!

When a perſon applies to be added to a church, if we are in a proper ſpirit, we ſhall wiſh that he may be found qualified; but this does not

imply that we are to judge him a Chriſtian, without ſtrict attention to what he profeſſes, and to the evidence this affords of his converſion and knowledge of the truth. This will alſo hold when a member has committed ſin. The true judgment of charity is judging according to evidence, but with an earneſt deſire that this evidence may be favourable. True charity in judging is always oppoſed to raſh or cenſorious judgment, which ſprings from want of love. The world live in malice and envy, and therefore judge one another's motives without mercy. As to religion, indeed, they are all charity; that is, they are indifferent about the matter, and rather pleaſed that their own diſregard of God ſhould be kept in countenance by that of other men. A judge in a criminal cauſe who is gratified by finding a priſoner guilty, is regarded as a tyrant; but if, on the other hand, he is partial in the examination of witneſſes, and evidently endeavours to ſcreen the priſoner from juſtice, he is conſidered unfit for his office. He might tell us he was judging charitably, but we ſhould reckon him unjuſt, unfaithful to the laws, and injurious to the public.

Charity will lead us to rejoice if, upon inveſtigation, the conduct of a perſon be found blameleſs, and this temper will ſecure us againſt raſh or haſty judgment. If he be in the wrong, the leſs ſin he has committed ſo much the more agreeable to us, for charity rejoices not in iniquity.

James condemns an oppoſite temper, which leads us to wiſh to find a perſon in the wrong, that we may have the pleaſure of inflicting puniſhment on him.

A confeſſion of ſin is not always ſatisfactory when there are aggravating circumſtances in the caſe. Were we, indeed, aſſured of a man's real repentance, whatever had been his ſin, it would be our duty to receive him again as a brother; but he may confeſs in order to avoid being put away from the church. It is mortifying to be excluded from any ſociety, and an ungodly man may do many things to prevent his being ſeparated. But if we have reaſon to ſuppoſe that this is the caſe, if his ſin has been aggravated, and we have not evidence of his real repentance, we muſt certainly exclude him.

It is not only proper to notice any open ſin in our brethren, but if we ſee any brother waxing cold in religion, we ought to admoniſh him. Were this properly attended to in private, it would prevent many open ſins, and conſequently many caſes of diſcipline in a church. It is of great importance, not only to warn and admoniſh our brethren, but alſo to give them no countenance in improper conduct. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw from every brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after the tradition (παραδοσις, commandment) which ye have received from us. And if any man obey not our

word by this epiſtle, note that man, and have no fellowſhip with him, that he may be aſhamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother," 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. 14, 15. It is certainly our duty to turn away from thoſe who ſhew that they are not under the influence of the truth; but the above precept ſeems rather to direct us to teſtify diſapprobation with the conduct of the members who are acting improperly, although there may not be ſufficient ground for immediate excluſion. The apoſtle particularly alludes to the caſe of thoſe who were idle, and conſequently buſy-bodies. It would be much calculated to convince ſuch of their folly and ſin, not only to admoniſh them, but to avoid their company, while we ſhew regard and affection to them.

A queſtion has been ſtated with regard to ſuſpending a member from communion on account of his conduct. We have no example of ſuch a practice in Scripture, nor does it appear proper. If a perſon have ſhewn by his conduct that his profeſſion was falſe, he is of courſe to be put away as one in whom we were deceived. It was owing to our ignorance that he was admitted. If notwithſtanding the impropriety of his conduct we have reaſon to believe him a Chriſtian, let him be rebuked and reſtored. But why ſuſpend him? If he be in a weak and backſliding ſtate, this is no reaſon for depriving him of the means of grace. His enjoying theſe does not prevent

us from warning and admoniſhing him of his danger. Although, then, ſuſpenſion, as a *puniſhment*, is always improper, caſes may perhaps occur where it may be neceſſary to ſuſpend a member. If appearances are ſo ſtrong againſt him, that the confidence of the church in him as a Chriſtian is deſtroyed, although perfect certainty be not obtained, it ſeems impoſſible to allow him to continue in fellowſhip, nor ſhould he in ſuch circumſtances deſire it. No time ought, in ſuch a caſe, to be loſt. We ought to endeavour to get to the bottom of it as ſoon as poſſible. When a man was ſuſpected of being a leper in Iſrael, he was to be ſhut up until the matter could be aſcertained, and then either reſtored to the congregation or excluded, Lev. xiii. 4. 8.

It has been aſked, What will the world ſay if they ſee a man with whoſe ſin they are acquainted ſitting down at the Lord's table as a member of the church*? We are to provide for things honeſt in the ſight of all men; but in order to this, we muſt not add to the ordinances of Chriſt, nor deprive a brother of what he is entitled to, notwithſtanding his fault. If we keep cloſe to the ordinances of Chriſt, there is no danger of our being juſtly branded with diſregard to practical holineſs.

* It is very proper that the world ſhould underſtand, that, when a member of a church commits ſin, his brethren do not confirm their love towards him till they are ſatisfied of his repentance.

There are inſtances ſometimes of members withdrawing from a church when they become ſubjects of diſcipline. In this caſe they muſt be dealt with, and, if they will not hear the church, muſt be to them as heathen men and publicans. When a perſon has been excluded, he ought to be ſolemnly and affectionately warned of his danger, and the members ought to avoid all familiarity with him, with a view to bring him to repentance. At the ſame time, that regard which we ought to feel and expreſs towards all mankind, ought to be ſhewn to him. We muſt avoid the appearance of revenge, contempt, ſelf-preference, ſelf-righteous diſtance, or even of indifference. If he ſhould afterwards profeſs repentance, and if we ſhould have good grounds to believe it ſincere, we ought to receive him juſt as we ought to receive any one at firſt who gives evidence of loving the Lord Jeſus. His former profeſſion may tend to excite ſuſpicion, but we muſt endeavour to judge impartially. His applying again is a hopeful ſymptom. If we receive him we muſt do it cordially, and not ſhew ſuſpicion and diſtruſt.

We have a particular precept to mark them who cauſe diviſions. "Now I beſeech you, brethren, mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them; for they that are ſuch ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and by good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the

hearts of the ſimple," Rom. xvi. 17. When falſe brethren creep unawares into a church, they will ever be apt to cauſe diviſions. Such ſhould be avoided. They may aſſume an appearance of zeal, but if they diſturb the peace of the church, by introducing any other doctrine than that taught by the apoſtles, or by ſtriving about curious queſtions and ſtrifes of words, which tend to promote parties or to ſtumble the diſciples, 1 Tim. vi. 4. they ought, after admonition, if it prove unavailing, to be put away, although there may be nothing flagrant in their conduct.

All caſes of diſcipline ſhould be conducted with much patience. Nothing ſhould be hurried through. No determination ſhould take place when there is any agitation in the minds of the members, which is apt to ariſe on ſome occaſions when a matter is firſt mentioned. A church ſhould ever remember, that they are aſſembled by Chriſt's authority, that he is in the midſt of them, and that they are not to pleaſe themſelves. Chriſtians are apt to forget that they are not their own maſters, nor at liberty to act according to their feelings. They are under the law of Chriſt, nor is this leſs binding becauſe it is the perfect law of liberty.

Sometimes a member may take offence unjuſtly. He may complain of his brother without cauſe. In ſuch a caſe, his brother ought to endeavour to ſatisfy him, and, if they cannot agree, to get one or two more, as in the caſe of a pri-

vate offence. We ought to abſtain from any thing in itſelf indifferent which grieves our brethren, although it may gratify ourſelves. But we muſt not abſtain from what we believe to be our duty, becauſe they diſapprove of it. This would render us the ſervants of men. If our brethren be ill-informed, we muſt endeavour to inſtruct them, and, if neceſſary, ſeek the aſſiſtance of ſome others. If they be thus convinced that we are acting properly, it is well; if not, they muſt learn to exerciſe forbearance, and not endeavour to be lords of our conſcience.

Nothing can be more improper than for a member who is diſſatisfied with the conduct of another, to withdraw from the Lord's table. This ought to be publicly noticed. It is like the behaviour of a pettiſh child, and is indeed an undervaluing of the ordinances of Chriſt, and caſting a ſtumbling-block in the way of others. Let them go and tell their brother his fault, and, if neceſſary, tell it to the church. Thoſe who neglect this rule, ought to be ſeriouſly admoniſhed.

Another great impropriety, an effect indeed of letting ſlip the goſpel, conſiſts in not ſitting down at the Lord's table, becauſe our mind is not in a proper frame. If we are conſcious we are hypocrites, let us by no means profane the Lord's ordinances, either by ſitting down at his table, or by remaining members of a church of Chriſt. If our brother have juſt cauſe of complaint againſt us, let us not think to make atone-

ment for our sin by partaking of the Lord's supper. Let us confess our fault, and make all the reparation in our power. But to refuse to shew forth the Lord's death because our brother has wronged us, or because we have committed sin, shews gross ignorance, and amounts to wilfully rejecting the only sacrifice, Heb. x. 26.

But how, it may be said, can we sit down, even once, at the Lord's table, when we are dissatisfied with a member? Is not our unity represented by the ordinance, and how can two walk together except they be agreed?—Have you malice against your brother? you should by no means observe the ordinance in this temper. If you hate him, you are a murderer. But you think he is acting in a manner unbecoming the gospel. You know he is acting sinfully. After taking the previous steps, lay his conduct before the church, and let it be investigated. You may be mistaken. Some alleviating circumstances may appear, of which you are not aware. Let his conduct by all means be examined, but do not you, in the mean time, neglect the Lord's ordinance, and, in fact, withdraw from the fellowship of the church.

A church ought to exercise discipline, they ought to admonish and to exclude those who depart from any of the leading truths of the gospel, or who introduce any new doctrines. Thus Jesus and his apostles instruct us. "I would they were even cut off who trouble you," Gal. v. 12. "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast

them who hold the doctrine of Balaam. So haſt thou alſo them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." Rev. ii. 14, 15.

In all that has been ſaid of diſcipline, it has been taken for granted, that by the church is meant the whole body of an aſſembly of Chriſtians. The idea of a church of Chriſt ſitting by its repreſentatives (as the paſtors or elders have improperly been called) has no foundation in Scripture. All the directions given by the apoſtles to the churches reſpecting diſcipline were evidently addreſſed to the whole church. When the church of Corinth was charged to put away the wicked perſon, 1 Cor. v. 13. the charge was given to the whole church, not merely to the elders; and when they are directed to reſtore him, the commandment is delivered to the whole body, and the former act of diſcipline is called their act. Sufficient, ſays the apoſtle, to ſuch a man is this puniſhment which was inflicted *of many*, 2 Cor. ii. 6. When the whole church joins in an act of diſcipline, it is calculated more to impreſs the mind of the offender, to manifeſt the obedience of the whole to the laws of Chriſt, and to create a greater abhorrence of ſin in the church; for thus paſſing ſentence on another, they condemn themſelves if they ſhould ever act in a ſimilar manner.

All will allow that much is ſaid on the ſubject of diſcipline in ſome of the epiſtles of the New Teſtament. Hence the exerciſe of Scriptural diſ-

cipline tends to throw much light on the word of God, and to lead a church conſtantly to appeal to Scripture, the advantage of which is manifeſt. It directs the attention of church members to paſſages to which none elſe think of giving heed, whereby, in fact, they make them void. Almoſt all the difficulties which occur in the exerciſe of diſcipline, ariſe from the difficulty of aſcertaining the duty of individuals in particular circumſtances. When this is diſcovered, the duty of a church is eaſily eſtabliſhed.

As thoſe only can be expected to have a competent knowledge of the adminiſtration of human laws who have attended courts of juſtice, ſo Chriſtians become acquainted with the laws of Chriſt by witneſſing their application in his churches. Theſe laws are often vilified, as productive of ſtrife and diviſion, from being imperfectly underſtood and improperly adminiſtered. This is apt to be peculiarly the caſe with a church newly formed, the members of which have been connected with ſocieties where ſcriptural order was not known, or at leaſt not acknowledged. Such ought to be very careful, leſt, through ignorance and inexperience, they bring reproach on the name of Chriſt.

I conclude this chapter, by quoting a remarkable teſtimony to the excellence of Chriſtian diſcipline by one who was not in a ſituation where he could practiſe it.

'The apoſtle's order to the Corinthians,' ſays

Dr Macknight, 'to keep no company with wicked perſons, though ſeemingly ſevere, was in the true ſpirit of the goſpel. For the laws of Chriſt do not, like the laws of men, correct offenders by fines, and impriſonments, and corporal puniſhments, or outward violence of any kind, but by earneſt and affectionate repreſentations, admonitions and reproofs, addreſſed to their reaſon and conſcience, to make them ſenſible of their fault, and to induce them voluntarily to amend. If this remedy proves ineffectual, their fellow Chriſtians are to ſhew their diſapprobation of their evil courſes, by carefully avoiding their company. So Chriſt hath ordered, Matt. xviii. 15, 16. 17. "Moreover, if thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Earneſt repreſentation, therefore, from the injured party, followed with grave admonition and reproof from the miniſters of religion, when the injured party's repreſentation is ineffectual, are the means which Chriſt hath appointed for reclaiming an offender; and with great propriety, becauſe being addreſſed to his reaſon and conſcience, they are calculated

to influence his will as a moral agent, and ſo to produce a laſting alteration in his conduct. But if theſe moral and religious means prove ineffectual, Chriſt hath ordered the ſociety of which the offender is a member to ſhun his company and converſation, that he may be aſhamed, and that others may be preſerved from the contagion of his example. This laſt remedy will be uſed with the greateſt effect, if the reſolution of the ſociety, to have no intercourſe with the offender, eſpecially in religious matters, is openly declared by a ſentence deliberately and ſolemnly pronounced in a public aſſembly, (as in the caſe of the inceſtuous Corinthian), and is ſteadily carried into execution.

'The wholeſome diſcipline which Chriſt inſtituted in his church at the beginning, was rigorouſly and impartially exerciſed by the primitive Chriſtians towards their offending brethren, and with the happieſt ſucceſs in preſerving purity of manners among themſelves. In modern times, however, this ſalutary diſcipline hath been much neglected in the church; but it hath been taken up by gaming clubs, who exclude from their ſociety all who refuſe to pay their game-debts, and ſhun their company on all occaſions as perſons abſolutely infamous. By this ſort of excommunication, and by giving to game-debts the appellation of *debts of honour*, the winners on the one hand, without the help of the law, and even in contradiction to it, have rendered their unjuſt

claims effectual, while the losers, on the other, are reduced to the necessity either of paying, or of being shunned by their companions as infamous. I mention this as an example, to shew what a powerful influence the approbation or disapprobation of those with whom mankind associate have upon their conduct; and from that consideration, to excite the friends of religion to support her against the attempts of the wicked, by testifying on every fit occasion, their disapprobation of vice, and their contempt of its abettors; and more especially, by shunning the company and conversation of the openly profane, however dignified their station in life, or however great their fortune may be *.'

CHAPTER XI.

OF FORBEARANCE.

Some churches, formed, in most things, on the model of the New Testament, have fallen into a very hurtful extreme concerning discipline. They require all to be of the same mind in all things, and do not seem to shew that respect to

* See Dr Macknight's view and illustration of 1 Cor. v.

the rights of conſcience, and that tenderneſs to perſons of different degrees of advancement in religion, which we uniformly find inſiſted on in the word of God. Hence diſcipline is apt to degenerate into a ſyſtem of terror. This tends to overawe and to prevent a member from acting as he thinks right, or from freely delivering his opinion, leſt he ſhould diſpleaſe others, or even be put away from the church. It leads him ſinfully to pleaſe men, and to ſacrifice the authority of Chriſt at the ſhrine of the church. It may indeed produce ſilence and non-reſiſtance, and the appearance of unity, but it is the ſilence of ſlaves and hypocrites. In conſequence of this tyranny over conſcience, undeſerved reproach has been caſt upon Chriſtian diſcipline.

In entering on this ſubject I would make the following remarks.

1. There is an abſolute neceſſity for perſonal conviction both reſpecting truth and duty. No Chriſtian can act religiouſly upon the conviction of another.

2. The important duty of mutual forbearance reſts not only on the precepts given to the ſtrong to bear the infirmities of the weak, Rom. xiv. and xv. but on every one conſidering themſelves to be but learners in the ſchool of Chriſt. It ſurely ill becomes ſuch to act as if they were infallible.

3. The Scriptures acknowledge no man as a diſciple of Chriſt, except one who habitually

ſtudies to know and to do his Maſter's will in all things; therefore,

4. Although the more advanced ought to bear with beginners, yet the obſtinate and ſtationary profeſſor has no claim on the forbearance of a church.

We have no inſtance in the Scriptures of any thing in the primitive churches being decided by votes. This appears at all times unneceſſary, and can be attended with no good effect. If difference of opinion ſhould ariſe, much prayer and reference to the word of God ſhould take place; if the minds of the members are not in a very improper ſtate, unanimity will probably ſoon be reſtored; and if every individual ſhould not be of the ſame mind, ſtill the members may exerciſe mutual forbearance.

Churches formed on the model of Scripture, and yet not exerciſing forbearance, have no pope or general aſſembly to whom they may appeal. The power is in the church itſelf*. To this every member is ſubject, and deſpotiſm in conſequence of this may be exerciſed to a conſiderable extent. It has alſo this peculiar diſadvantage: a Roman catholic, or a member of the church of Scotland, may do many things without the Pope or the General Aſſembly ever hearing of it.

* Yet an individual, or a few, may gradually acquire a pre-eminence in the church, and may exerciſe power with a higher hand and with leſs jealouſy, that they do not nominally poſſeſs it; this ought to be guarded againſt.

The diſcipline of theſe churches, ſuch as it is, is not very ſtrict; but a member of a church of Chriſt, acting on the plan now ſpoken of, is liable to be perpetually haraſſed and controuled in the path of duty. He is laid thereby under great temptation to diſſimulation and hypocriſy, and his bondage keeps pace with the rigidneſs of their diſcipline. Such a ſyſtem is completely unſcriptural. Chriſt invites us to liberty, only he warns us not to uſe it for an occaſion to the fleſh; but by the diſregard or denial of forbearance, a church exerciſes a lordſhip over its members which hath no place in the kingdom of Chriſt.

The apoſtles indeed inculcated unanimity on the churches. This is greatly to be deſired, but the fear of the church can only produce the reſemblance of it, and ſomething greatly worſe than any differences whatever. There are young men, fathers, and babes in Chriſt, and as their attainments in knowledge are different, in ſome reſpects they muſt be differently minded, and muſt act differently. Some things are ſo plain in the word of God, as to be underſtood by all; but there are other things of which we obtain the knowledge gradually, by examining and comparing the Scriptures. In learning a language, all the pupils muſt not be placed in the ſame claſs. When a boy firſt goes to ſchool, he muſt not be ſet down to Virgil or Homer. In like manner, the members of a church muſt not all be conſidered as equal in capacity or knowledge.

This is implied when we inſiſt upon them to be exactly of one mind, and cenſure them if they are not; they are thus in fact trained up to be the ſervants of the church. If forbearance be not exerciſed, inveſtigation is checked, the increaſe of love is prevented, party-ſpirit is promoted, and real unity is in fact obſtructed, and placed further off.

If it can be proved by the word of God that a member is living in ſin, he muſt be called to repentance, and if he remain obſtinate, he muſt be put away whether he ſees his error or not. This we have clearly ſtated from the word of God. But although we are convinced that he is wrong on ſome points, if he hold faſt the great truths of the goſpel; if he be evidently living under the influence of the fear of God, in the things he underſtands; if his error ariſe from miſapprehenſion, and if he be willing to liſten to what can be ſaid, he ought to be treated with all long-ſuffering. It is impoſſible to ſtate the particular caſes in which forbearance ought to be exerciſed; but in proportion as juſt views are entertained of the rights of conſcience, this will be a ſtriking feature of a church of Chriſt; and when the Scriptures are diligently and impartially attended to, the difficulties in practice will not be great.

Individual members ought alſo to exerciſe forbearance toward a church; they are not at liberty to leave it, although there may be ſome differences of opinion among them. It is equally

important for a church to act in the same manner towards individuals. It is true that ignorance in religion is often sinful, but there are different degrees of guilt. A man may be in the dark as to some things, from the prejudices of education, or other causes and prejudices, while he is living near to God, and seeking to know his will more perfectly. Scriptural forbearance does not teach us to treat the things in which we differ with others as matters of no moment. All divine truth is important*. But it is perfectly consistent with strict scriptural discipline, to hold communion with those who believe the gospel and are exemplary in their conduct, while they are ignorant on some points which we yet consider to be revealed by God.

There does not appear to be any good reason why a church should not admit to communion all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Many passages of Scripture seem to teach us to do so. Paul having stated that nothing availed but a new creature, adds, "As many as walk by this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God," Gal. vi. 16. In writing to Timothy he says, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them who call on the Lord out of a

* The expression, *agreeing to differ*, in common use with many, is much calculated to mislead. It seems to reduce divine truth to a level with the uncertain speculations of philosophers. It also represents unity of sentiment, or the unity of the faith, as not only unattainable, but of little consequence.

pure heart," 2 Tim. ii. 22. I cannot conceive words more expreſsly to enjoin the forbearance for which we plead, than Phil. iii. 15. 16. "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwiſe minded, God will reveal even this unto you. Nevertheleſs, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule, let us mind the ſame things." If any have attained to faith in the ſame Saviour, and to follow after holineſs, ought they not to receive one another as Chriſt hath alſo received them to the glory of God? Rom. xv. 7.

The apoſtle indeed beſeeches the Corinthians, by the name of the Lord Jeſus, that they all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions (ſchiſms, σχισματα) among them; but that they be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind and the ſame judgment, 1 Cor. i. 10. This is moſt earneſtly to be wiſhed; and to this bleſſed ſtate ſhall all Chriſtians arrive when they ſee face to face. While they are here, they ought to be diligently preſſing forward towards perfection in knowledge and holineſs, and the greater progreſs they make, the more nearly will they agree with each other; but in their preſent imperfect ſtate they muſt forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Eph. iv. 2, 3. and this will be neceſſary till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſta-

ture of the fulneſs of Chriſt, Eph. iv. 13. When the exhortation to the Corinthians is taken by itſelf, it may appear to countenance the neceſſity of the actual exiſtence of perfect unity of ſentiment in the churches of Chriſt; but if we conſider its connexion, we ſhall perceive that the exhortation is directed againſt ſtrife, factions, and parties, which aſſuredly ought not to be permitted in a church. This will be ſtill more manifeſt, if we compare it with a ſimilar ſentiment, where the apoſtle is inculcating mutual forbearance. Having exhorted the ſtrong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and prayed that in this very thing (το αυτο) they might be like-minded with Chriſt, who pleaſed not himſelf, he adds, "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," Rom. xv. 6. Forbearance, then, is the right road to unity.

The apoſtle, in the xiv^th^ and xv^th^ chapters of the Romans, is expreſs on this ſubject, and the whole tenor of the New Teſtament condemns that want of forbearance which ſome have contended for under the name of unity of faith. It is true, in theſe chapters he ſpeaks particularly of the ordinances of the ceremonial law. Theſe were in fact aboliſhed by the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, yet the Jewiſh believers continued to obſerve them, and were indulged in doing ſo. This indulgence did not ariſe from the indifference of the things themſelves, for the ſame things were poſitively prohibited to the Gentiles, Gal. v. 2.

It seems to have been partly owing to the reverence due to the institutions of God, and partly to his tenderness towards his ancient people, and his unwillingness that they should perish; but neither of these causes could operate in regard to the Gentiles, to whom the law had never been delivered, and instead of lessening, it would probably have increased their prejudices against the gospel. But while God would not allow the Gentiles to be brought under the yoke of the law, he taught them to bear with, and not to despise the weak among the Jewish Christians; on the other hand, while they were indulged in keeping the law, they were not to condemn their Gentile brethren, nor such Jewish believers, like Paul, who were strong. Thus the Jews were gradually weaned from their attachment to their customs, by witnessing the liberty of the Gentiles, and even of their brethren stronger in the faith. They were farther instructed by the epistle to the Hebrews, and by the destruction of Jerusalem, an event so awfully expressive of God's displeasure with Israel, which destroyed their prejudices altogether.

In opposition to this view some maintain, that the Jews were actually bound to observe the law of Moses, till the epistle to the Hebrews was written, affirming, that one revelation is necessary to set aside a former one *. This is true;

* But how do we know when the epistle to the Hebrews was written? There are different opinions respecting this. Nothing is revealed concerning it, and we cannot found truth or duty upon speculative reasoning.

but Jesus had plainly intimated the conclusion of the old dispensation. This had been declared most clearly by his apostles, and we know assuredly that Peter had an express revelation to teach him not only to preach to, but to eat with the Gentiles, Acts x. 28. Paul speaks of himself and of others who were strong, eating all things, while those only who were weak eat herbs, Rom. xiv. 2. xv. 1. Now this must refer to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, to whom no such liberty of observing the ceremonial law was given. But according to the view of these chapters given by those who argue against forbearance, what they contain was merely a temporary revelation, not calculated for our instruction; the whole, however, of the New Testament is practical, and the instructions there given for mutual forbearance, are intended for general and permanent use.

Knowledge puffeth up; and when we esteem our knowledge of church-order, &c. so great, that we cannot exercise forbearance towards the disciples of Christ who differ from us, there is reason to fear we know nothing on this subject as we ought to know, 1 Cor. viii. 2. Indeed it is a great error in churches to suppose, that in every respect, even in regard to order, they are perfect. We may be fully convinced that the constitution of our church is scriptural, and that on the whole we are followers of the apostolic churches, but still we ought to be sensible that we have more to learn.

In proportion as real religion prevails in a church, they will be able to extend the arms of brotherly love, and embrace all who love the Lord Jeſus; and in proportion, on the contrary, as the power of religion declines, they will be unable to bear any difference of opinion among their members. Let us, for inſtance, take the queſtion of infant baptiſm. It is one which is highly important; but why may not thoſe who differ on this point hold fellowſhip with one another? I baptiſe my children—I do it to the Lord—I believe it to be his will—If I am wrong, I ſhould be very happy to be convinced that I am ſo. Another does not baptiſe his children—To the Lord he does it not. I am alſo bound to believe that he wiſhes to walk in the path of duty; that he wiſhes to be convinced if he is wrong. In other things we agree. We feel the ſame corruptions. We love and obey the ſame Saviour. We are equally begotten to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Chriſt; but it ſeems we muſt not be members of the ſame church on earth. Surely this is the ſpirit of error. This wiſdom cometh not from above. Indeed, if a Pædobaptiſt and an Antipædobaptiſt cannot be members of the ſame church, or ſit down together at the Lord's table, they ought not to pray together.

Want of forbearance retards us in our progreſs. It alienates our affections from each other. It leads us to be jealous leſt we ſhould be convinced that we are in the wrong, and is a great bar in the

way of our embracing truth. Men muſt not be driven in religion. They muſt be perſuaded and drawn by love. It may be ſaid, Confuſion perhaps might ariſe, if thoſe who differed in ſuch matters were members of the ſame church—It would lead to ſtrife. But may not the unruly be warned? May not thoſe who cauſe diviſions be avoided, or if they will ſerve their own belly, and not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, be put away*?

Want of forbearance leads Chriſtians to contend about churches and ordinances in an improper ſpirit, as if they were chiefly deſirous to ſilence others, and to vindicate their own practice, inſtead of enforcing the ordinances of Chriſt from a perſuaſion how much they tend to promote holineſs, ſpirituality of mind, and deadneſs to the world. The members of a church under any form of government, may degenerate into that ſpirit which led the Jews to ſay, "The temple of the Lord are theſe," Jer. vii. 4. They may be animated by church pride as men are by national pride; valuing themſelves on account of the excel-

* It is by no means intended that where there is a difference of opinion in regard to ſo important a matter, believers ought not to reſort to ſeparate worſhip. This, though the unhappy fruit of remaining ignorance in Chriſtians, is not inconſiſtent with mutual love. But where there is no opportunity of doing this, it ſeems highly deſireable that a church of Chriſt ſhould ſhew their love to their brethren for the truth's ſake, although in ſome reſpects they may differ. It muſt however always be ſuppoſed, that where a few apply for fellowſhip with a church with which in ſome things they differ, that they alſo can make theſe the ſubject of forbearance, and not promote ſtrife in the church.

lence of their conſtitution and government, and deſpiſing others. Whenever this is the caſe, they are acting in a manner moſt diſpleaſing to God, and inſtead of promoting the obſervance of his ordinances, are rendering them contemptible. A tree is known by its fruit, and the ordinances of Chriſt, if properly attended to, will manifeſt their own excellence by their happy effects on our minds. The want of forbearance manifeſted in churches, in other reſpects ſcriptural, ariſes, I fear, from a meaſure of that intolerant ſpirit which is ſo congenial to corrupt nature, and which has been ſo much foſtered by the union of the church and the world, which cannot fail to produce perſecution. It is not eaſy at once to get free of the bad effects of the connections in which we were educated.

While we would ſtrongly enforce forbearance towards all who give evidence of loving Chriſt, let it be remembered that this never implies that we are not to act up to our views of duty, whatever offence it may give to others. We are to obey God rather than man. Chriſtians are bound to obey all the laws of Chriſt. To aſſociate with a church is not the leaſt important of theſe, and it is not enough that we be connected with a ſociety which bears that name, it muſt alſo have the ſame conſtitution, and be governed by the ſame laws with the churches of the New Teſtament.

It is of great importance that all Chriſtians ſhould ſeparate from churches, the conſtitution

of which is eſſentially different from that of the apoſtolic churches. Such are all in alliance with the world, and thoſe formed on ſimilar principles. There are Chriſtians in theſe; but ſtill they are not churches of Chriſt, and theſe Chriſtians are not obſerving all his commandments. They are walking diſorderly, perhaps not unlike ſome pious kings of Iſrael, whoſe hearts were right with God, and who yet ſacrificed on the high places. But however much we diſapprove of their conduct, yet, conſidering the prejudices of education, and other ſtumbling-blocks in their way, thoſe who are truly ſpiritual among them, and who are not acting in oppoſition to their own light in continuing in ſuch connections, ought to be treated with great tenderneſs and patience. By a contrary conduct their prejudices will be more ſtrongly rivetted.

Although Chriſtians will probably be always called to exerciſe forbearance to each other in conſequence of difference of judgment on ſome points, yet in proportion as they ſimply follow the word of God according to the light they have received, theſe points of difference will be diminiſhing. The idea, that the Scripture does not contain a complete and univerſal rule for worſhipping God, the authority of great names, and the ſtandards of eſtabliſhed churches, tend greatly to prevent union among Chriſtians.

CHAPTER XII.

OF SCHISM AND HERESY.

SCHISM and hereſy are branded in the Scriptures as very great evils. It is therefore proper to examine the preciſe meaning of the terms.

Σχισμα, which occurs eight times in the New Teſtament, is in our verſion only once tranſlated *ſchiſm*, 1 Cor. xii. 25. It ſignifies diviſion, and is ſo tranſlated, John vii. 43. ix. 16. x. 19. 1 Cor. i. 10. xi. 18. Schiſm does not imply merely ſeparation from a church, but any difference exiſting in it, *i. e.* among the members, which cauſes alienation of affection.

The differences of opinion between thoſe who were weak and thoſe who were ſtrong in faith, did not conſtitute ſchiſm, unleſs theſe differences were productive of faction and ſtrife, and prevented their loving as brethren. In this caſe, from the want of forbearance, ſchiſms would have taken place. There might be alſo ſchiſms on account of matters of greater importance. A member might deny ſome important truth, or refuſe obedience to an important precept. This would produce ſchiſm in a church, and it could only be put an end to by his liſtening to the church calling him to repentance, or by his being put away.

Although differences of opinion may exiſt in a church of Chriſt, without producing ſchiſm, yet there is always ſome danger leſt differences in knowledge and ſpiritual underſtanding produce it, and hence the importance of Chriſtians endeavouring to grow in knowledge. In proportion to their growth, will they be more firmly united to one another. They will be more in ſubjection to Chriſt, and leſs prone to be toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the ſleight of men. The diviſions, or ſchiſms, which exiſted among the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10, 11, 12. aroſe from attachment to various teachers.

Schiſm hath in proceſs of time come to ſignify the ſame as ſeparation; all who ſeparate from the moſt impure communions are branded as ſchiſmatics, and the word in this ſenſe has been bandied about as a term of reproach amongſt the different denominations of profeſſing Chriſtians.

Hereſy, αἱρεσις, is uſed in Scripture to denote a ſect or a party, whether good or bad. Sects are commonly, though not always, produced by differences in opinion, but the term is expreſſive of the effect, not of the cauſe. Thus Paul ſays, "After the moſt ſtraiteſt *ſect* of our religion I lived a Phariſee," Acts xxvi. 5. The Jews, Acts xxiv. 5. charged Paul as a ringleader of the *ſect* of the Nazarenes, and the apoſtle in reply obſerves, after the way which they called a *ſect*, ſo I worſhip the God of my fathers. Probably their intention was to excite the governor to puniſh him for his

religion, as he was not, according to them, entitled to the toleration with which the Jews were favoured. He avoids this, by declaring himself not to have forsaken the religion of his fathers. The Jews at Rome, Acts xxviii. 22. desired to hear of Paul what he thought concerning a *sect* which was every where spoken against. They neither express a favourable nor unfavourable opinion of Christians by the term.

'That there is a great affinity in their significations,' *viz.* schism and heresy, says Dr Campbell, 'is manifest, but they are not convertible terms. I do not find that the word σχισμα is ever applied in holy writ to a formed party, to which the word αιρεσις is commonly applied. I understand them in the epistles of this apostle (Paul) as expressive of different degrees of the same evil. An undue attachment to one part, and a consequent alienation of affection from another part of the Christian community, comes under the denomination of σχισμα. When this dispositon proceeded so far as to produce an actual party or faction among them, this party is termed αιρεσις.' Dr Campbell goes on to notice that this was the case even where there was not a separation. Thus the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees all worshipped together in the temple.

A Christian church is one united body, the members of which, while possessing different degrees of knowledge, are in a sinful and inconsistent state if divided into various parties or sects. The

unity of the body is broken by them, and therefore to charge a Chriſtian church with ſplitting into ſects or parties, is to charge them with corruption in what is eſſential to them as a ſociety. 'Hence the difference between the word in the hiſtorical and epiſtolary parts of the New Teſtament. In the former, if any thing reprehenſible or commendable be ſuggeſted, it is not ſuggeſted by the term αιρεσις, but by the words conſtrued with it. In the latter, it is always uſed in a bad ſenſe, becauſe addreſſed to communities which do not admit of ſects *.'

Men aroſe ſoon after theſe communities were formed, who loved to have the pre-eminence, to ſerve their own purpoſes, counteracting the apoſtolic regulations in the churches. Thus the falſe teachers in Galatia and at Corinth acted, and thus too acted Diotrephes, 3 John 9. They excited ſchiſms and ſects in the churches, and the apoſtles inform us that they knew ſuch ſects were to ariſe. They are frequently propheſied of in the New Teſtament. Thus Peter writes of falſe teachers, who ſhould privily bring in damnable *hereſies*, ſeducing men from obedience to the laws of Chriſt, delivered by the apoſtles, and through covetouſneſs making merchandiſe of them, teaching the moſt abominable doctrines. Separating from the apoſtolic churches, or promoting ſeparation, was in fact rebelling againſt Chriſt, and

* See Dr Campbell on ſchiſm and hereſy, in his preliminary diſſertations to his Tranſlation of the Evangeliſts.

therefore *hereſy*, i. e. ſect-making, is reckoned among the works of the fleſh, which if men do, they ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul informs the Epheſian elders, that of themſelves ſhould men ariſe ſpeaking perverſe things, *drawing away diſciples after them*. Thus they expreſsly denied the Lord that bought them *, 2 Pet. ii. 1. He forbade his diſciples to aſpire after ſuch pre-eminence. "Be not ye called rabbi, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren; and call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father who is in heaven; neither be ye called maſters, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt," Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

This will help us to explain the precept to Titus, ch. iii. 10, 11. "A man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject, knowing that he that is ſuch is ſubverted and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf." A heretic here means a man who ſets himſelf up as the head of a ſect, and conſequently conſents not to the words of Jeſus Chriſt delivered by the apoſtles, 1 Tim. vi. 3. he is ſubverted, he errs from the faith, and is condemned of himſelf, for he acknowledges Jeſus to be the Chriſt, and yet, by affecting dominion and making a party which look up to him as their head, he tramples on his laws.

It is no doubt a very ſerious matter to ſeparate

* Denying the Lord has generally been explained of denying his divinity; but it is equally applicable to denying his authority, by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

from a church of Chriſt. But let it be obſerved, that the authority of Chriſt requires us to ſeparate from antichriſtian churches, where various unſcriptural practices and terms of communion are required, where we muſt call ſome man, or ſome ſet of men, *Maſter*, and where we cannot obſerve the commandments of Chriſt. In many ſocieties calling themſelves churches, it is impoſſible to attend to the precept, Matt. xviii. 15,—17. Now, in ſuch a caſe we virtually prefer the church above Chriſt, by continuing in it. Where diſcipline is entirely neglected, or not adminiſtered according to Scripture; where men are by birth members of a church; and where it differs not from a worldly kingdom, it is an important duty to come out from among them,—neither to remain ourſelves in a ſituation where we cannot yield full obedience to Chriſt, nor to countenance men in ſuch unſcriptural practices. To quit ſuch a church by no means ſubjects us to the appellation of ſchiſmatics or heretics in the ſcriptural ſenſe of theſe words. They are truly ſchiſmatics, who, by bringing in pernicious hereſies, have ſet aſide the practices of the apoſtolic churches, and forſaking the laws of Jeſus Chriſt, have ſubſtituted in the place of his mild and eaſy yoke, the doctrines and commandments of men. Every member of ſuch churches is in fact condemned by himſelf, for while in words he admits Chriſt to be his Maſter, he yet ſubmits to the authority of others, even to the ſubverſion of his laws. 'It appears,' ſays

Mr Joſeph Hallet, ‘ that the *chief heretic* now in the world is the biſhop of *Rome*. He has raiſed and united to himſelf a great *party* or *faction*, who, wherever they dwell, make innumerable things parts of their worſhip, and neceſſary to communion with them, which God never required them to ſay or do in public. No divine command can be pretended for the ſubmiſſion of the whole church to the biſhop of Rome, for the worſhip of angels, the virgin Mary, and other ſaints ; for the worſhip of images and of the hoſt ; for prayers in an unknown tongue ; for making images and pictures of the inviſible God ; for the celibacy of the clergy ; and ten thouſand other things which are made as neceſſary to communion in the church of Rome, as love to God or faith in Chriſt. Theſe human inſtitutions in the worſhip of God, which are made terms of communion in that church, are the *only* cauſe of the diviſion between her and the Proteſtants. Let her only conform her worſhip to the divine rule of the Scriptures, and we ſhall be one with her in a moment. As long as ſhe continues to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, ſo long ſhe is *heretical*, and the author of that ſect which is denominated *Popiſh*. And moſt juſtly is it called a *hereſy* or *ſect*, becauſe its centre of union is the greateſt heretic or ſectary in the world, viz. the biſhop of Rome, who impiouſly ſets up himſelf as the head of a faction, in oppoſition to the plain,

divine rules of faith and worſhip laid down by Chriſt in the goſpel *.——

'The foundation,' adds he, 'of the greateſt part of the hereſies or ſects in the church, has been the uniting ſeveral congregations under one common government. Originally, every congregation was independent of all others, and was ſubject to no foreign authority. Accordingly we find, that in the New Teſtament the word *church* never ſignifies a dioceſan or national church, but only the catholic church, or one ſingle congregation. This is too plain to be diſputed. This independency of congregations ought to have been maintained in all ages; and it is impoſſible they ſhould have a right, ſince it is in itſelf an immorality to give it up. Every congregation has a natural and unalienable right to worſhip God in that manner as they really believe, after an impartial examination, to be of divine inſtitution, and acceptable to God. But they cannot exerciſe this right, if any foreigner (i. e. one not belonging to their aſſembly) has authority to preſcribe a form of worſhip for them. For in this caſe it may eaſily happen, that foreign authority may forbid them to worſhip God in the way *they think* right, and oblige

* Mr Hallet's obſervations are moſt juſtly applicable to the church of Rome, but they are alſo applicable to all other great bodies, called churches, which pretend to legiſlate for themſelves, and by thus practically declaring the imperfection of the laws of Chriſt, occaſion ſchiſms and hereſies. Of this he ſeems aware by what follows.

them to follow a rule which *they believe* to be displeasing to God*.'

It is said that we have no commandment to leave a church, and that various corruptions, such as we have mentioned, do not warrant us to consider the body which practises them not to be a church. To prove this, the epistles in the Revelation to the churches of Asia are quoted; and it is observed, that the Lord did not command any of the members to separate from these. But these churches were very different, as we have already seen, from many so called in our days. It by no means appears that there was a mixed communion in any of these churches, although some of them tolerated improper members, Rev. ii. 14, 15. They were commanded to put these out, in other words, to separate from them. And surely the conduct of true believers in these churches, would at least have been equally sinful if the corrupt members had been the majority, and they had continued in communion with them.

Let no Christian say, I am dissatisfied with my present connection, but where shall I join myself? I see evils among all parties; and so you would have seen in the apostolic churches, but if you had not joined them on this account, you would have rejected the authority of Christ. A church of Christ is so simple an institution, that Christians, however

* Notes on several Texts of Scripture, by Joseph Hallet, *jun.* c. viii. p. 391,—395. Vol. III. London 1736.

few, can be at no loſs to obſerve the inſtitution. We formerly noticed the need of forbearance. Without this a church cannot ſubſiſt. There will be endleſs diviſions, and conſequently ſtumbling-blocks in the way of the world. But where can we find a warrant for continuing in a ſociety, the laws of which are eſſentially different from thoſe of the churches planted by the apoſtles, and which hardly reſemble them in any thing but the name? The members of theſe ſocieties totally neglect the precepts of Chriſt in regard to church-fellowſhip. What he meant by a church was one thing, and what they mean by it is another. Have they a warrant to neglect or diſobey his precepts? If not, believers ought to quit ſuch connexions.

There may be cauſes which will juſtify our ſeparation from a church whoſe outward forms are agreeable to Scripture: if they depart from the doctrines of the goſpel; if they do not attend to the ſpirit, as well as to the letter of the laws of Jeſus Chriſt, and if they will not ſuffer exhortation on the ſubject, nor ſubmit to the word of God, we ſhall not be profited in the connexion. But we ought to beware leſt we take ſuch a ſtep lightly, and from improper motives. Here I muſt advert to the conduct of ſome who cannot, indeed, join worldly ſocieties, but ſeem indifferent about Chriſtian communion. 'From the formation of the church at Jeruſalem, there is not a ſingle inſtance in Scripture of a real Chriſtian,

who did not, wherever he came, *essay to join himself to the disciples* *.' Surely there is something amiss in an opposite line of conduct. Let Christians seriously consider the importance of not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, and let them remember, that attending as hearers merely on the Lord's day, is not observing the spirit of this precept, nor even the full extent of it literally.

Those too are not less inconsistent, who are always talking about New Testament churches, are well acquainted with the theory of their order, and yet remain in unscriptural connections. They have at best but a speculative acquaintance with the subject; their consciences are not impressed.

An end will never be put to schism and heresy among Christians, until they all render universal obedience to the laws of Jesus Christ, and acting on the principles of the reformers, (who are branded as heretics and schismatics by the church of Rome) reject the authority of those who in any respect have violated the constitution of his churches, or have rendered obedience to any of his precepts impracticable amongst their disciples. Then, and not till then, will that promised unity amongst the disciples of Jesus be manifested, which shall convince the world of the excellence of Christianity. Then shall the world believe that the Father hath sent his beloved Son into the world, when his disciples are all *visibly* one, John xvii. 20, 21.!

* Miss. Mag. for Feb. 1804. p. 61.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXCELLENCE OF THE PLAN LAID DOWN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR THE SOCIAL WORSHIP OF CHRISTIANS, AND THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM OBSERVING IT.

EVERY commandment of God, like every one of his works, bears the marks of his infinite wisdom, and is admirably adapted to the end he has in view. We may therefore be assured, that the observance of all the ordinances appointed for his people in their associated state, must be attended with great advantages.

A very striking feature in the system we have attempted to delineate, is its simplicity. This is characteristic of all the works of God, and is a proof of his excellent wisdom: 'Nature,' says Sir Isaac Newton, 'no where employs many agents in things which can be effected by few*.' In the constitution and discipline of a church of Christ, there is no confusion of civil and religious privileges. There cannot be an approach towards persecution, except there be a complete departure from the laws of Christ. The ordinances of Christ are in a great measure independent of outward circumstances. If there be Christians in the same neighbourhood, whether they be poor or rich, learned

* 'Natura nusquam per plures quod per pauciores fieri possit.'

or illiterate, they may enjoy the privileges connected with a church of Chriſt *. Such a church may equally exiſt under any form of civil government. It in no ſhape interferes with any one, nor can, ſo far as it acts upon proper principles, be juſtly regarded as an object of jealouſy to the ſtate †. It receives indeed no laws from man in the things of God, but the ſubjection of the members, in all civil matters, to the powers which be, is confirmed in the ſtrongeſt manner. This ſubjection is completely independent of the religion profeſſed by the magiſtrate. He is to be ſubmitted to, not becauſe he is a Chriſtian or a heathen, an epiſcopalian or an independent, but becauſe in the courſe of providence he is ſet over us in the things of this life. Any deviation in a member of a church, from this obedience or honour due to the magiſtrate, in word or deed, is a

* It is evident that no other kind of churches than what are called *independent*, can poſſibly be formed in *many* ſituations. Such an one is practicable in *all* circumſtances where there are any believers. This affords no ſlight argument in favour of this mode of church-order.

† Churches independent of each other, and acknowledging no head upon earth, are certainly far leſs formidable to civil Government than a great body comprehending thouſands, it may be, in all different parts of the country, ſubject to an individual, or to a repreſentative body. The former, were they hoſtile to Government, muſt alter their conſtitution before they could attempt any thing againſt the ſtate. Had they been intended by Jeſus Chriſt for ſupporting religion by force, he would have given them a different conſtitution; but the weapons by which his kingdom is promoted and defended, are not carnal.

breach of the law of Chriſt, and conſequently will become a ſubject of diſcipline, and, if not repented of, muſt infallibly iſſue in his excluſion from the church.

We may obſerve alſo how exactly this ſyſtem correſponds with the genius and ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion. The members of a church, we have ſeen, are governed by love. They are treated as children, not as ſlaves. Their obedience, is thus a reaſonable and voluntary ſervice; every one muſt perceive that ſuch obedience will be peculiarly acceptable to God. It is the neceſſary effect of the love of God being ſhed abroad in their hearts.

How well does it ſuit alſo that union which ought to ſubſiſt among brethren! The goſpel is preached for the purpoſe of reconciling ſinners to God, and conſequently of uniting them to one another. A great change takes place in all who believe. They become temples of the Holy Ghoſt who dwells in them, and are taught of God to love one another. Still much corruption remains, and the malice and envy natural to them are apt to make their appearance. To unite them more cloſely in love, they are commanded to aſſociate together. Society civilizes and improves the characters of men. Chriſtians, as well as other men, are neceſſary to each other. Chriſtian ſociety promotes a mutual exchange of good offices, and renders this practicable. They receive much ſatisfaction and ſupport from fellowſhip with each other, and this

tends to increaſe their mutual affection. Their aſſociation, however, is attended with no peculiar civil privileges, and therefore is likely to be diſregarded by men who mind earthly things. This ſerves to promote that ſeparation from the world, ſo much inſiſted upon in Scripture, and evidently of ſo much importance to the harmony and welfare of a church. Indeed it is one diſtinguiſhed excellence of a ſcriptural church, that it cannot be united with the world. This cuts off a great and never-failing ſource of corruption.

The diſpoſitions and characters of men are alſo much influenced by habit. Connection with a church renders attention neceſſary to various commandments given by Chriſt, and our being accuſtomed to obey, and experiencing the advantage of this, leads us to do ſo with greater cheerfulneſs.

It alſo cheriſhes a ſpirit of dependence on Chriſt. We formerly obſerved, that he has promiſed a peculiar ſuperintendance and interpoſition in behalf of his churches, and that they never were intended to go on without it. Chriſtians will have conſtant experience of this in a church. This promotes a ſpirit of prayer, and tends to keep alive deep impreſſions of divine things upon our minds.

It muſt be evident alſo how much the diſcipline which Chriſt has inſtituted is calculated to form the Chriſtian character, and to make it appear in a proper light to the world. We are all naturally proud. Even when ſenſible that we are in the

wrong, we do not like this to be noticed by others, far less that they should point out the impropriety of our conduct. But Christians are to learn of Christ, who was meek and lowly. They are to be subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility. They are not to act as if they were little interested in their mutual welfare; they are to admonish each other as brethren, members of the same family. We are all apt to overlook a beam in our own eye, while we see a mote in our brother's. The Lord expressly condemns this, but has commanded us to watch over each other in love, not to suffer sin upon our brother, but in any wise to rebuke him. This at once promotes circumspection, and leads us to confess our faults one to another.

We have described the various steps to be taken with an offending brother. These, like every other part of the institutions of Christ, are none of them arbitrary. What doth the purest love dictate towards a child or a brother who by imprudent or guilty conduct is injuring himself? Doth it not impel us to reason with him on the imprudence of his conduct? Doth it not persuade him to act otherwise? If our remonstrances fail of success, doth not affection lead us to employ the influence of those friends whose opinion he values? If this prove ineffectual, and there is danger of his misleading other members of the family, do we not naturally speak to him before the whole, and endeavour to reclaim him, or at least to warn

the reſt againſt his example? What is this but juſt the law of Chriſt!—a law evidently founded on the moſt conſummate knowledge of the human heart, and approved by the common ſenſe and conduct of mankind*? While this order is thus ſo admirably calculated to form the character of real Chriſtians, it will diſguſt hypocrites and carnal profeſſors, and drive them out of a ſociety where they cannot live quietly in their ungodly practices. To ſuch, the care exerciſed by the members one over another, will appear officious and impertinent, and they will ſeek for ſome ſituation in which their profeſſion may be maintained with leſs trouble. This is in itſelf moſt important; for ordinances and churches were never intended for any but the real diſciples of the Lord Jeſus.

It alſo tends to lay low thoſe high thoughts which we are apt to carry even into religion. Chriſtianity does not level the diſtinctions which take place in civil ſociety. If it find a man a king or a nobleman, it does not degrade him from his rank in ſociety; at the ſame time it teaches

* The following circumſtance lately took place in a Chriſtian church: On the admiſſion of ſome members, the paſtor addreſſed them reſpecting the duties incumbent on them. He particularly inſiſted on our Lord's rule concerning offences, Matt. xviii. A perſon preſent, ſo ignorant that he did not know who had given the precept, but ſuppoſing that it originated with the paſtor, expreſſed to a friend whom he had accompanied, his approbation of the meaſure, and how much credit he thought the paſtor deſerved for laying down ſuch a regulation.

believers, that in Chriſtianity "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Chriſt is all and in all," Col. iii. 11. Believers have one Maſter, even Chriſt, and they are all brethren. In a church of Chriſt there muſt be no reſpect of perſons, James ii. 9. founded on rank, fortune, or abilities; let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low, James i. 9, 10. The members are to be eſteemed according to the grace conferred upon them, without any regard to their outward circumſtances. They are entitled to reſpect from one another in the world according to their ſtation in civil ſociety, but all diſtinctions are ſwallowed up when they meet as brethren to obſerve the ordinances of Chriſt. A contrary ſyſtem, however agreeable to our pride, is hurtful to our ſouls, and gives a very falſe view of the nature of the kingdom of Chriſt.

Another excellence of this plan is, that it tends greatly to prevent the accumulation of error. When all appeals are directly to the word of God, when the queſtion is not what we have been accuſtomed to do, but what is recorded of the practice of the apoſtles, we are neceſſarily led to cloſe and habitual examination of the Scripture, eſpecially on the occurring of any new or difficult caſe. This promotes growth in knowledge, and conſequent improvement, whereas, when we have deviſed a ſyſtem of laws by which churches are to

be governed, abuſes neceſſarily ariſing from the imperfection of human laws, as well as from the execution of them, will creep in, and that tendency to degenerate which we ſee in all human ſyſtems, will materially affect us. When this takes place, inſtead of good men ſtudying to promote improvement, and to come continually cloſer to the word of God, the corruption of the maſs will neceſſarily lead them only to guard their ſtandards from innovation, and thus all progreſs is at an end.

The longer a ſyſtem has been eſtabliſhed, and the more it deviates from truth, the greater is the difficulty of reformation; whereas, in a church guided entirely by the word of God, although on particular occaſions it may miſtake the rule, and may act improperly, yet ſuch deviations, it is to be hoped, will not proceed far without being diſcovered. When they are diſcovered, ſo far from any obſtacle being preſented to a change of ſyſtem, every motive which can be conceived ariſing from the authority of Chriſt, conſiſtency with their profeſſion, and deſire to promote the welfare of the church, will neceſſarily lead to it.

We muſt not omit to obſerve the influence which attention to ſcriptural order in a church will have on the ſpread of the goſpel. This has been doubted, and has even been alleged as an objection againſt the independency of churches. But we have ſeen that churches, although independent of each other, muſt, and will, ſo far as they

follow the word of God, co-operate. Each church will be a ſtar in the right hand of Chriſt, from which the light of the goſpel will iſſue forth. The gifts of all the members are, in ſuch ſocieties, habitually called into exerciſe, and the more religion proſpers among them, the more zealous will they be to diffuſe the knowledge of Chriſt around them.

Such of the elders as are not engaged in worldly buſineſs, and who are qualified to draw the attention of the careleſs, will occaſionally viſit the neighbourhood, and declare to ſinners the great things of eternity. Where a few in a town or village are brought to know the truth, the foundation of a new church is laid, which will receive aſſiſtance from their ſiſter church, until they are enabled, by an increaſe of knowledge and gifts among themſelves, to ſpread the favour of the Redeemer's name.

It may be ſaid, what becomes of diſtant parts where the people are poor, and unable to ſupport a paſtor? We have already obſerved, that although it is greatly to be deſired that one or more paſtors in a church ſhould give himſelf wholly to the work, and conſequently be ſupported, unleſs able to ſupport himſelf, yet this is by no means indiſpenſably neceſſary. Even where this was not the caſe, how much would the conduct of a church meeting together to obſerve the ordinances of the Lord, and individually maintaining a becoming converſation in their families, tend, merely

of itself, to attract the attention of the careless! The pastors of such a church labouring with their own hands would not prevent this. Much good might be done by their assembling, even previous to their obtaining pastors. In proportion to the poverty of the neighbourhood, they would be less disgusted with homely and familiar methods of conveying divine instruction. When hearing their neighbours, with whom perhaps they formerly associated in wickedness, speaking of what God had done for their souls, is there not ground to hope, through the blessing of God, that they might be judged and convinced? 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. In the late remarkable work in Breadalbane, this was literally the case. Many more have been awakened by the prayers and exhortations of a few whose hearts God had touched, than by the preaching of the person employed to labour among them *.

If men are willing to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, if they are contented to labour in the gospel while supplied with the means of living and the comforts of life, in the same manner as formerly when engaged in business, some may, and would in most cases be able to give themselves *wholly* to the work. It was never the intention of Jesus, that when a man became a pastor of a Christian church, he should rise to a superior rank in society, and require indul-

* See a letter, containing an account of this work of God, in the Missionary Magazine for 1803, page 268.

gences to which he had been hitherto a ſtranger. An outcry may be raiſed about unlearned men being employed in the work of the miniſtry. The advantages of learning no one can diſpute; but to make human learning an eſſential requiſite for the miniſtry of the goſpel, is adding to God's word, and virtually charging him with an omiſſion which our wiſdom has ſupplied. Indeed, were it not that the generality of Chriſtians have connected themſelves with worldly ſocieties—were all believers in the world joined, as they ought to be, with ſcriptural churches, there would be no want of men with a competent meaſure of learning, who might hold offices in the churches. He who called Moſes, who was learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians, and Saul who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, will always, by making his goſpel come effectually to the hearts of ſome of better education, take care that his people ſhall not be deprived of any advantages which they can derive from learning. But at preſent, many ſuch are comparatively uſeleſs, by remaining in circumſtances where their gifts are unoccupied. But let us appeal to facts. When was the goſpel moſt ſucceſsful? Was it not in the beginning, during the three firſt centuries? a period when it had to ſtruggle againſt almoſt every difficulty—a tyrannical government, a ſelfiſh prieſthood, the prejudices of the people, and yet it triumphed over all oppoſition. See it taken under the care of the ſtate! Magnificent edifices were erected,

lofty titles deviſed, liberal proviſion made for its miniſters; and what was the conſequence? Real religion almoſt unknown, and a wretched ſyſtem of ſuperſtition in its ſtead; and all this becauſe men had forſaken the word of the Lord, who thus ſhewed that their wiſdom was fooliſhneſs.

It may be ſaid, that during the firſt ages the churches poſſeſſed miraculous gifts, and that the ſucceſs of the goſpel was the effect of them, together with the remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit. How long miraculous gifts continued we cannot tell, but theſe did not neceſſarily inſure the ſucceſs of the goſpel. With reſpect to the gracious influence of the Spirit, we have no expectation of the ſpread of the goſpel, or of the proſperity of the churches, independent of this. But why is the Spirit withheld? Muſt we not ſuppoſe that he is grieved by his ordinances being ſlighted, and the wiſdom of man depended on in preference to the power of God. When his people will not hearken to his voice, he gives them up to their own folly, and teaches them by painful experience that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from God. Battering-rams would have appeared much more proper for beating down the walls of Jericho than ram's-horns, but Iſrael would never thus have got poſſeſſion of the city.

In ſhort, whether we conſider the importance of impreſſing upon believers and upon the world proper views of the nature of Chriſt's kingdom, and of preventing men under pretence of religion

from disturbing the governments under which they are placed; whether we take into view the excellence of uniting Christians in the closest bands of love—of separating the precious from the vile—of promoting dependence upon Christ, and leading men to abound in prayer; whether we think of the duty of using fit means to confirm the Christian character, and to check our natural pride so as to strike the minds of the world, and lead men to glorify God in the day of visitation; whether we estimate properly the importance of dealing in the most tender and affectionate manner with offenders, of preventing the accumulation of error, and of promoting growth in knowledge, and of spreading the gospel in the world—we shall find it of the utmost moment minutely to attend to the regulations of Christ concerning social religion. Were all the Christians upon earth thus united as one body under their great Captain, were they using their united influence to spread the gospel at home and abroad, what glorious things might we not expect to see? These days are approaching. The increasing regard paid to the word of God is their auspicious harbinger, and shortly, we hope, the song shall be raised, "Sing O heavens, and be joyful O earth, and break forth into singing O mountains; for the Lord has comforted his people, and will have mercy on his afflicted!"

CHAPTER XIV.

HINTS CONCERNING THE EVILS ARISING FROM NEGLECT OF THE SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, ENJOINED BY JESUS CHRIST IN SOCIAL WORSHIP.

CHRIST gave himself for his own, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. To effect this redemption, the gospel is preached to every creature. To some it is the savour of life, to others the savour of death. Some are thereby begotten again to a lively hope of eternal life, the whole tenor of their conduct is changed, Christ becomes precious to their souls, and their great aim is to live to his glory; others receive the message with indifference or contempt. Blinded by their lusts, the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them, and they hate those whose exemplary lives condemn their wickedness.

The Lord, who well knew the effects which the preaching of the gospel would occasion, through the depravity of man, assured his disciples that he did not come to send peace on earth, but a sword; that his religion would set a man at variance with his nearest relations. Hence it is said, "If any man will come after me, let

him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;" and the apostle exhorts us to go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Instead of counteracting this tendency in the gospel to separate his people from the world which lieth in wickedness, all the ordinances of Christ for his people are intended to promote it. "Come out from among them," saith the Lord, and be ye separate, and I will receive you." "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Sanctification primarily signifies separation. We see from the word of God how much this must have tended to secure Christians from temptation, and to call the attention of unbelievers to the truths of God.

When Christianity was substituted for heathenism as the religion of the empire, separation was, in a great measure, counteracted. All who conformed to the established religion were considered to be Christians, and if they died in communion with the church, they were supposed to go to heaven *. This system has continued to this day in every country of Europe.

Thus all the advantages of Christian fellowship were at once given up. The union in select so-

* So every one who dies in the communion of the church of England is committed to the grave as a dear brother, of whose happy resurrection certain hope is expressed. Although this is not the form in Scotland, yet the spirit of the constitution is the same. All are Christians, and consequently all go to heaven.

cieties which ſo much tended to knit Chriſtians together in love, and to provoke them to good works, was at an end. They might indeed aſſociate together in private, but in the church they were mixed with the maſs of mankind. What muſt the conſequences have been? The Holy Ghoſt declares that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Here the whole lump was leaven, and a very few only of its parts not aſſimilated to the whole! We may indeed deceive ourſelves. We may ſay, ſhall a wicked man, being a member of the ſame church, hurt me? May not I be very ſpiritual, although he is carnally minded? This may ſeem very plauſible, but it contradicts Him who has ſaid, "Be not deceived, *evil communications corrupt good manners;* awake to righteouſneſs and ſin not, for ſome have not the knowledge of God. I ſpeak this to your ſhame." It was a ſhame for the Chriſtians at Corinth to tolerate any among them who knew not God, and what muſt it be to Chriſtians in Great Britain to be connected with a ſociety where real Chriſtians bear no proportion in number to ungodly men?

The apoſtle gives us particular directions how to act towards ſuch a ſociety. "This know alſo, that in the laſt days perilous times ſhall come. For men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, diſobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, falſe accuſers, incontinent,

fierce, defpifers of thofe that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleafures more than lovers of God, having a form of godlinefs but denying the power thereof; *from fuch turn away*," 2 Tim. iii. 1,—5. There were fome perfons of that fpirit in thofe days, who, under the name of Chriftians were enemies to the crofs of Chrift, Phil. iii. 18. but the myftery of iniquity was not then completely revealed, 2 Theff. ii. 8. It remained for the laft days to form churches, the great bulk of whofe members fhould be men of fuch characters *, while the number of believers was comparatively fmall.

Where Chriftians, under the influence of the gofpel, watch over and admonifh one another, livelinefs and fpirituality are promoted; but in a fociety where real Chriftians have no more connection with each other than with the ungodly, how much muft fuch duties be neglected, and confequently formality prevail? Chriftians in fuch connections are rarely exhorted to the peculiar duties which members of a church of Chrift owe to each other, and of which the epiftles are full, fuch as peculiar affection, mutual exhortation, watching over and admonifhing each other. At

* Thefe churches are ruled by worldly men, the great bulk of the teachers preach another gofpel, while a few godly men make a feeble and ineffectual oppofition to the current. Inftead of ftemming it, they themfelves are borne down, led into many fnares, and often induced to act in a manner unbecoming their profeffion.

leaſt theſe duties are never, and cannot be urged upon them towards one another, as church members.

The union between the church and the world directly tends alſo to promote worldly-mindedneſs. The very exiſtence of a church of Chriſt, ſeparated from the world, counteracts this; whereas, the other foſters and cheriſhes it. All diſcipline, except for groſs crimes, is neceſſarily at an end in ſuch an eſtabliſhment. The removal of this check tends to lower the ſtandard of Chriſtianity, eſpecially when conſidered in connection with our being taught to conſider all thoſe to be Chriſtians who remain members of the church. Not only is diſcipline neglected, but prejudices againſt it are excited, even in real Chriſtians. This is not ſurpriſing; whatever truth we do not confeſs, whatever religious ordinance we do not practiſe, we naturally diſregard more and more, and that in proportion to the meaſure of light we once had on the ſubject.

In ſuch a connection, Chriſtians have great temptation to want of tenderneſs of conſcience. There may be ſome practices which they diſlike, but every thing is fixed and regulated by law. There muſt be no deviation. Hence even good men often ridicule ſcruples of conſcience on thoſe ſubjects, and ſpeak with contempt of thoſe who entertain them. The perſon who admits them is accounted weak and fooliſh, and other Chriſtians uſe their influence to perſuade ſuch to act in

oppoſition to theſe ſcruples. How different this from the commandment of Chriſt! He enjoins us to avoid whatever we cannot practiſe in faith, and declares a thing lawful in itſelf to be ſin to the man who is not fully perſuaded of this in his own mind, Rom. xiv. It is a common ſentiment, even among good men, that if things in general be right, particulars are not to be too minutely canvaſſed. Nothing can be more hardening to the conſcience, than dealing in this wholeſale manner in religious ordinances. Each particular obſervance ought to be attended to from regard to the authority of Chriſt.

By this connection, a great check is impoſed upon growth in knowledge. Every eſtabliſhed church has its confeſſions or articles. It is not enough that a member of this church judges a thing to be ſcriptural. Unleſs he would be deemed a heretic, he muſt make it coincide with the ſtandards of the church. Where this cannot be done, a man has great temptation to remain ſilent, or to bring forward his opinion in ſuch a way as ſhall prevent its being fully underſtood *. The union between church and ſtate alſo greatly tends to alienate the minds of Chriſtians from each other, and to promote party-ſpirit. Members,

* Confeſſions of faith of human compoſition, it is true, promote an appearance of unity, but they do not produce the reality. They tend to diſcourage the people from ſearching the Scriptures, by inducing a belief that theſe are too difficult for the unlearned, and that their *ſummaries* contain whatever is valuable in them.

and especially the clergy of the established church, are apt to look upon such as have separated from it with a jealous eye. In the true spirit of monopoly, they consider the people as all belonging to them, and account every one who leaves them a deserter. This naturally excites a spirit of opposition in others, who are tempted to endeavour to make reprisals, and to proselyte persons to their party from improper motives.

Dissenters who do not see the evil of the connection between the church and state are led to look with a jealous eye on the loaves and fishes of which they are deprived. While those who understand the doctrine of Scripture on this head, and cannot but decidedly condemn the opposite practice, are regarded as censorious and troublesome, and destitute of meekness and forbearance. But in fact nothing tends so much to promote want of forbearance, as the connection between church and state, for it confounds and mixes religion and the world together. In the former, it is always a great duty to exercise forbearance. In the latter, it is often impossible, because it may be dangerous to society. When the two are mixed together, the intolerance which may be very necessary in civil matters is insensibly transferred to religion.

That there are Christians in such societies, who are spiritually-minded, whose conversation is in heaven, and who associate much with real Christians, I most readily admit; but still their situa-

tion is unfavourable, and if they adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, it is in ſpite of many hindrances connected with their ſituation, and their neglect of many important ordinances, the obſervance of which ſhould at once be conſidered as a teſt of our regard to his authority, and as the appointed means of our growth in grace. We know who has ſaid, "Lead us not into temptation," and indeed we ſee the unhappy effects of neglecting this caution in the conduct of many connected with ſuch eſtabliſhments, of whom we have ground to entertain a favourable opinion.

Miniſters, who ought to be examples to the flock, are peculiarly expoſed to temptation from the mixture of the church with the world. They often acquire in ſuch connections, by their office, a certain rank in ſociety which raiſes them above thoſe with whom they were formerly on a level. This is not only unſcriptural, but tends to prevent, in a great meaſure, that intercourſe with their people which is calculated to be ſo uſeful. It lays them alſo under great temptations to court the favour of the higher claſſes of ſociety, and to ſhew that reſpect of perſons *in the church*, which is ſo ſeverely condemned in Scripture. Our natural pride leads us to affect the ſociety of thoſe who are moſt honourable in the world, and we have no need of any incentives to this. But candidates for offices in an eſtabliſhed church are, in ſome meaſure, obliged to ſtudy to recommend themſelves to their ſuperiors. They know too well that faith-

fulneſs and ſeparation from an ungodly world are not the beſt recommendations, and they are thus induced to adopt other meaſures. A more unfavourable ſituation for being prepared to act as faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, cannot be conceived.

Miniſters are alſo too much led by their ſituation to intermeddle with politics *. They in fact hold offices under government, and muſt fulfil the duties expected of them. No one ſuppoſes that any government will ſupport a religious eſtabliſhment except for political purpoſes. The miniſters are paid with the public money, and muſt be expected to do ſomething in return. 'Who does not ſee,' ſays Mr Locke, 'that theſe good men are indeed more miniſters of the government than miniſters of the goſpel †.' They are apt to be made tools of, and their zeal for religion to be diverted into improper channels. This is exempli-

* When Archbiſhop Leighton was connected with a preſbytery, an order had been given that the miniſters ſhould attend particularly to preaching to the times. Leighton contented himſelf with preaching the goſpel, and was called to account for diſobedience. He enquired if he was the only offender? Being informed he was, he ſaid, if ſo many had been preaching to the times, ſurely one brother might remind the people of eternity.

† Letter on Toleration, p. 197. Glaſgow edition, 1757.—The late Dr Robertſon, on its being urged that the people had a divine right to chuſe their own miniſters, admitted this in its fulleſt extent, but obſerved in the General Aſſembly, that the miniſters of the eſtabliſhed church were not the people's miniſters; they were appointed and paid by Government, and conſequently the people had no right to chuſe them.

fied in the deſcription Mr Samuel Rutherford gives of the church of Scotland, during what are reckoned its pureſt times. ‘ When our land and church were thus contending for that begun reformation, theſe in authority did ſtill oppoſe the work ; and there was not then wanting men from among ourſelves, men of prelatical ſpirits, who, with ſome other time-ſerving courtiers, did not a little undermine the building; and we, doating too much upon ſound parliaments and lawful general aſſemblies, fell from our firſt love to ſelf-ſeeking, ſecret banding, and little fearing the oath of God.

‘ Afterwards our work in public was too much in ſequeſtration of eſtates, fining and impriſoning, more than in a compaſſionate mournfulneſs of ſpirit towards thoſe whom we ſaw to oppoſe the work. In our aſſemblies we were more to ſet up a ſtate oppoſite to a ſtate ; more upon forms, citations, leading of witneſſes, ſuſpenſion from benefices, than ſpiritually to perſuade and work upon the conſcience by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt. The glory and royalty of our princely Redeemer and King was trampled on, as any might have ſeen in our aſſemblies. What way the army, and the ſword, and the countenance of the nobles ſeemed to ſway, that way were the cenſures carried. It had been better had there been more days of humiliation and faſting in aſſemblies, ſynods, preſbyteries, congregations, families ; and far leſs adjourning commiſſions, new

peremptory ſummonſes, and new drawn up proceſſes; and if the meekneſs and gentleneſs of our Maſter had got ſo much place in our hearts, that we might have waited on gainſayers and parties contrary minded, and we might have driven gently as our Maſter, Chriſt, who loves not to over-drive, but carries the lambs in his boſom *.'

Miniſters in the circumſtances we ſpeak of, are under the greateſt temptations to violate the dictates of their conſciences, and the excuſes which they form for ſubſcription to what they do not *bona fide* believe, are calculated to produce the moſt dreadful conſequences. There are good men who do not heſitate to admit that they do not believe, in its plain and obvious import, what they have in the moſt ſolemn manner profeſſed and ſubſcribed; and they quibble upon expreſſions, in direct oppoſition to the obvious meaning and ſpirit of their ſubſcription, in order to quiet their conſciences. Their danger in this reſpect will keep pace with their knowledge. An hundred years ago men were more in the dark reſpecting toleration, the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom, the power of the magiſtrate in religion, and various other ſubjects, than they are at preſent; and conſequently their vows and their ſubſcription of the ſtandards, which remain the ſame, were leſs ſinful, and theſe, we may add, are daily becoming more and more ſinful.

* Rutherford's Teſtimony, at the end of his Letters, p. 522. Glaſgow edition.

Another great evil is the association of good and bad men as ministers of the same church. They meet together in their courts, and consult as brethren. They acknowledge one another as such in public, while in private the one brands the other as fanatics or designing men, merely courting popularity, and they in their turn speak of their brethren in private, though they may not publicly avow this, as men who are destitute of the truth. Thus do they, themselves being judges, *sit in council with the ungodly*, professedly consulting with them about the order of Christ's house. This carries its own punishment along with it, for the party which is generally the strongest, seem to rack their ingenuity to stretch the consciences of their brethren to the utmost, by obliging them to take part in matters which they have repeatedly declared they cannot engage in with a good conscience. What effect must their submission have upon their hearers? They preach to them to despise all consequences in comparison of offending God, and they say well. But on receiving an order from their superiors, they quietly submit, or timidly excuse themselves, although they formerly appeared and declared themselves to be determined on the contrary. But they must quit a great sphere of usefulness if they hold out: What does this resemble, but doing evil that good may come? It is a delusion for any man to suppose that he shall be more useful by not fully acting up to the light of his own mind. John

Huſs, and Jerom of Prague, might have continued to preach the goſpel; they might, and doubtleſs would have ſeen ſinners converted to God by means of it; but they preferred the flames to this ſphere of uſefulneſs, and thus were eminent forerunners of the Reformation. It will be ſeen, I doubt not, in the day of God, that they have been far more uſeful than if they had left thouſands of real converts, and had themſelves died in the communion of the church of Rome. A man's uſefulneſs is not confined to his life-time. Thoſe who appear moſt uſeful while they live, will, perhaps in many inſtances, be found to have been really inferior in uſefulneſs to others who gave up apparently important ſituations for conſcience ſake. Let us recollect, that *while we do good in individual inſtances, the general tenor of our conduct may be very hurtful, and the latter may far exceed the former in its conſequences.* Let us alſo remember, that God has no need of us to carry on his work. He hates robbery for burnt-offering. The way to be uſeful, is diligently to ſtudy the Scriptures with much prayer, and to follow wherever they lead us.

But in this country the plea of uſefulneſs comes with a bad grace from any zealous miniſters of Chriſt for continuing in connexion with the national church. How are their hands tied up? What general exertions can they make to be uſeful? They may indeed labour in their own pariſh, but here they muſt ſtop.——

Conſcientious men are not only placed in very unpleaſant circumſtances when connected with an eſtabliſhment, but the doctrines of Chriſt are, by means of them, blaſphemed as making men troubleſome. It is not poſſible that they can be ſo compliant as mere time-ſervers. The latter ſerve only one maſter, they conſult alone the wiſh of men in power; the former have, beſides, the authority of Chriſt to attend to. When a ſtateſman has any buſineſs for the clergy, he will find the one ready to obey, the other are more ſcrupulous. They do not feel the yoke ſit quite eaſy. They are apt to wince, they ſerve two maſters, and hence are denominated wild, diſaffected, &c.*

It appears then that theſe good men, inſtead of being neceſſary to the exiſtence of ſuch churches, are in fact troubleſome members of them, in proportion as they have any ſhare in their management. Conſcience leads them to endeavour to correct abuſes. The conſequence is, jarring, ſtrife

* The following epithets are moſt liberally beſtowed on the evangelical clergy of the church of England, in a well known periodical work:—WOLVES in ſheep's cloathing, who have moſt inſidiouſly crept into the eſtabliſhed church; PRETENDERS to ſuperior illumination, SEPARATISTS, SCHISMATICS, SECTARIES, SECEDERS, DECEIVERS.—See Antijacobin Review, Criticiſm on Mr Cadogan's Diſcourſes, &c. The clergy of the eſtabliſhed church of Scotland are leſs acquainted with this treatment, from their cloſer connexion with their unenlightened brethren, from their conformity to the world, and from that want of deciſion, zeal and activity in preaching the goſpel, and in meaſures to promote the ſalvation of ſinners, which diſtinguiſh ſo many excellent men of the church of England.

and evil paſſions are manifeſted on both ſides, and, after a fruitleſs ſtruggle, they are left in a minority.

If theſe things indeed be ſo, and if the connection of church and ſtate be ſo much calculated to injure Chriſtians, it is evident how much it muſt obſtruct the ſpread of the goſpel. This in a great meaſure depends upon the holy and conſiſtent conduct of thoſe whom Chriſt calls the light of the world. But the ſucceſs of the goſpel is alſo affected by this ſyſtem in various other ways. It leads the great bulk of the inhabitants of a country to ſuppoſe themſelves real Chriſtians. All the ordinances are diſpenſed to them, if not groſsly immoral, and that even by good men. There is not, I ſuppoſe, one child born in Scotland, who has not been baptized. This indiſcriminate adminiſtration of ordinances counteracts, in a great meaſure, the moſt faithful preaching. In the latter, the miniſter ſeparates between the precious and the vile; in the former he confounds them together. By this he warns hypocrites of their danger; by that he cries peace, peace. In the one he warns them to eſcape from the wrath to come; in the other he ſays, to you belong the privileges of the diſciples of Jeſus.

It may be ſaid thoſe are inexcuſeable who impoſe on themſelves under faithful preachers. This is true. Every man's blood, whatever be his circumſtances, will be on his own head. But does not the man who indiſcriminately adminiſters

ordinances favour the deluſion? The ungodly hear themſelves condemned in the ſermon, but they comfort themſelves that nobody is perfect, that in the main they are Chriſtians, and that the miniſter thinks them ſuch. Thus the conſciences of many are lulled aſleep, who could not be eaſy without obtaining what they call *Chriſtian privileges*.

We have remarked the bad effect which the ſyſtem is calculated to produce on miniſters as individuals, but we may add that it alſo greatly affects their miniſterial exertions. A miniſter ſees a whole diſtrict of country deſtitute of the goſpel, but he dare not proclaim therein the joyful ſound. What effect muſt this have upon him? Muſt it not damp his zeal, which, like every other benevolent paſſion, is increaſed by exerciſe, and decays by lying dormant? This deficiency may, in ſome meaſure, be ſupplied by men unconnected with the eſtabliſhment, but the ſyſtem tends, as we have ſeen, to prejudice the people againſt diſſenters. Not only is the offence of the croſs to be overcome, but they muſt alſo contend with the *eſtabliſhed* prejudices of the people.

Theſe obſervations, reſpecting the effect of this ſituation in repreſſing zeal for the diffuſion of the goſpel, apply to all the members of ſuch churches, as well as to miniſters. Although a man could afford to ſupport a dozen of preachers where the goſpel is not heard, he cannot do it while remaining in the eſtabliſhment, without following divi-

ſive or ſectarian courſes. This ſituation even affects the ſtyle of preaching by godly men. Many of thoſe who are truly pious, by no means deſcribe the marked diſtinction between Chriſtians and the world, with the plainneſs and deciſion they ought. On particular occaſions they indeed preach on alarming ſubjects, yet the application, inſtead of being ſo pointed as the ſentiments of theſe good men would naturally lead to, is often very general, and if the text be addreſſed to Chriſtians, a ſtranger would imagine that the miniſter conſidered the great bulk of his hearers to be of that deſcription.

We cannot omit to mention the concern which good men have in the introduction of ungodly men into the miniſtry, an evil which neceſſarily flows from a civil religious eſtabliſhment. That ungodly men may unawares creep in, in all ſituations, is undoubtedly true. There were ſome in Paul's time, men who preached Chriſt of envy and ſtrife. But it is obvious how much regular ſalaries and a certain rank in ſociety, affixed by Government to the office, muſt tend to increaſe the evil. This leads men to bring up their children to be miniſters, juſt as they breed them to other profeſſions. It matters not whether the livings are great or ſmall. In the one caſe, as in the church of England, families of rank and opulence will bring up their children for the church; in the other, as in the church of Scotland, the lower ranks. In both caſes, nothing can be ex-

pected but that, in general, they ſhall be deſtitute of religion.

It is a matter of fact, that the hypocriſy and immorality of the clergy in every age has been a ſtrong-hold of infidelity. The character of miniſters of Chriſt is fully deſcribed in the word of God. What a contraſt to this does the conduct of very many clergymen preſent! This is too notorious to be denied by the moſt partial. The following eloquent extracts from the charge of a dignitary in Ireland to his clergy, will ſhew us what kind of exhortations he thought neceſſary to be addreſſed to them. 'Behold him in the deſk, the organ and the voice of God's people; their interceſſor before the throne of grace, offering up in their name, and in their behalf, prayers and praiſes, ſupplications and thankſgivings, ſighs of repentance, and cries for pardon. Hear him in the pulpit, rehearſing ſome happy effuſion of piety and zeal, which he has copied (if he takes the trouble even of copying it) from the works of ſome worthy miniſter, whoſe talents and acquirements have been all directed to the inſtruction and edification of the faithful. I will not divert your attention to conſider, in the deſk, his diſtracted thoughts, his wandering looks, his irreverent attitudes, his careleſs, haſty, unintelligible recitation; I will not divert your attention to conſider, in the pulpit, with what a cold and icy tongue he chills the divine ardour that probably glows in every line of the original he has

copied. In what ſleepy tones and palſying accents he repeats expreſſions of irreſiſtible force and energy when accompanied by the ſpirit that originally dictated them, and which, coming *from* the heart, are ſo calculated to make their way *to* the heart. What I now chiefly wiſh you to contemplate is the conſcience and feeling of ſuch a man in ſuch a ſituation. Can he repeat a prayer in the name of the people, and not feel that they muſt conſider it as a mockery both to heaven and to themſelves? Is there a duty he can recommend, with the breach of which he muſt not feel that ſome of his hearers muſt be at that moment condemning him? Is there a virtue he can enforce, which his too faithful memory muſt not place ſome hearer before him who knows him to have outraged? Is there a vice he can ſtigmatize, with which ſome guilty aſſociate or indignant witneſs muſt not reproach him? To what face can he look, on which he muſt not expect to ſee a ſneer or a frown? What eye can he meet, in which he muſt not expect to read either ſcorn or indignation? Now, I beſeech you, what can we ſuppoſe ſo humiliating, ſo tormenting, as the mind of ſuch a man ſo circumſtanced? Under what excruciating reſtraint muſt he diſcharge his public functions?

'There is, indeed, a point where he may enjoy a fatal calm. We may indeed ſuppoſe him arrived at that deplorable ſtage of degeneracy, when the frequency of thoſe mortifying reflections has

rendered his heart callous. When tired of the combat between his conſcience and his paſſions, between the ſenſe of ſhame and the violence of vicious propenſities, he becomes ſo determined and barefaced in his contempt of whatever is decent and conſiſtent, that he ſets all public opinion at defiance, and even ridicules what, if he practiſed them, we might almoſt call the *virtues* of hypocriſy and diſſimulation. If this picture, when taken altogether, be too ſtrongly drawn for any general application, as I truſt it is, yet it will be eſſential towards our peſent object to conſider it in its different parts and ſhades. Happy are they to whom, in no inſtance, and in no degree, it can preſent their own likeneſs.'———

'Are theſe deſcriptions drawn from fancy? Are they the exaggerations of a moroſe, ſplenetic, and cenſorious mind? of the accuſer of his brethren, or one who would countenance their accuſers? *Would to God that this horrible thing was not to be ſeen in our Jeruſalem!* That there are ſo many exceptions to them is, and I hope ever will be our conſolation, our ſtay, and our ſupport. Should the general character of our clergy ever ſink into the extreme of degeneracy, he knows nothing of his religion who would not tremble in the conviction that, like the Jewiſh prieſts of old, and perhaps like others of more recent date, we were to be *made baſe and contemptible before the people, and were to feed ourſelves no more.* In vain ſhould we hope that a few characters, pre-

ſerving themſelves untainted and blameleſs, ſhould, by their interceſſions, their prayers, or their exertions, avert the terrible calamity. *Though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before God*, yet his mind could not be towards ſuch a deſcription of clergy. *Were Noah, Daniel, and Job among them, they ſhould deliver but their own ſouls by their own righteouſneſs.* He would not hear them, nor would he ſpare the reſt for *their ſakes* *.'

Chriſt undertook that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt the church; that a ſeed ſhould ſerve him in all generations. This has been fulfilled, and is a proof of his almighty power; but infidels aſcribe this to human influence, and to the operation of ordinary cauſes. Governors have employed Chriſtianity, ſay they, as a ſtate-engine, and hence it has been preſerved. At the ſame time, many who profeſs to believe the divine origin of Chriſtianity ſeem to be of the ſame mind, and ſpeak as if its continuance in the world depended on the foſtering care of civil government.

It is obvious how much all this tends to obſtruct the ſucceſs of the goſpel. Chriſtianity, planted and ſupported by the almighty power of Jeſus, is loſt ſight of, and a political ſyſtem is ſubſtituted in its ſtead, about which the men of this world contend. What ſhall we ſay of the profaning of religious ordinances as a qualification

* Sermons and Charges, by Dr O'Beirne, Lord Biſhop of Meath, p. 298,—300. 290. Lond. 1799.

for civil employments, of the Lord's ſupper being the neceſſary teſt of our fitneſs to be magiſtrates or ſoldiers? If Chriſtianity be not merely a ſtate engine, if it be not, as infidels have had too much encouragement to call it, a fable cunningly deviſed by politicians and prieſts, can we think that the jealous God will wink at ſuch things?

But are there no advantages attending a civil religious eſtabliſhment? Does religion gain nothing by the ſupport of government? Does it not give reſpectability to religion and to its miniſters? Alas! this it does communicate in the eyes of worldly men, but by means of this it only lays a ſtumbling-block in their way, and leads them to miſtake its nature. It adds indeed to the ſanctions of religion, ſanctions which are better calculated to affect mankind, while they do not believe the goſpel. But ſuch ſanctions, however neceſſary to civil laws, ought to have no place, for they can have no good effect in religion. Let us ſee how Chriſtianity was originally propagated in the world: "Therefore, ſeeing we have this miniſtry," ſay the apoſtles of Chriſt, "as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifeſtation of the truth commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong holds.

Caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt." 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2. x. 4, 5. Here is the example we ought to follow, and no other means will ever recommend or advance the religion of Jeſus. 'If to make proſelytes by the ſword,' ſays Dr Campbell, 'is tyranny in rulers, to reſign our underſtanding to any man, and to receive implicitly what we ought to be rationally convinced of, would be on our part the loweſt ſervility. Now, *tyranny* and *ſervility*, how much ſoever adapted to the genius of worldly domination, are by no means ſuited to the heavenly character of Chriſt's kingdom. The only means the goſpel permits us to employ for promoting this ſpiritual power is *perſuaſion*, which operates upon the underſtanding, and by it upon the will and affections. The great engine of ſecular dominion is *force*, which, without regarding underſtanding, will or affections, lays hold of the body. The language of our Lord to his hearers was, *If any man* WILL come under my guidance, Ει τις ΘΕΛΕΙ οπισω μου ελθειν. Nothing is obtruded or forced upon the unwilling. Now, as the great ſource of the infidelity of the Jews was a notion of the temporal kingdom of the Meſſiah, *we may juſtly ſay that the great ſource of the corruption of Chriſtians, and of their general defection foretold by the inſpired writers, has been an attempt to render it in effect a temporal king-*

dom, and to support and extend it by earthly means. This is that spirit of Antichrist which was so early at work, as to be discoverable even in the days of the apostles *.'

'When the secular powers,' says the same author, 'had changed sides, and were now come to be on the side of Christianity, this was the manner on the subject of religion in which some men among the clergy began to argue. Princes ought to be considered in a twofold capacity; one is, that of Christians, the other, that of princes, in both which characters they are bound to serve God; as Christians, by observing the divine commandments, like every other disciple of Christ; as princes, by purging the church of all schisms, heresies and blasphemies, punishing all transgressors of the divine precepts, but more especially those who, by the transgressions above mentioned, violate the first table of the decalogue; for as those sins are committed more immediately against God, they are much more heinous than theft, adultery, murder, or any sins committed against our neighbour. Now under the general denomination of sins of the first table, every sect (were their verdicts to be severally taken) would comprehend almost all the distinguishing tenets of every other sect. And though, in support of their plea, they might have many specious things

* Preface to Dr Campbell's Translation of the Four Gospels, Vol. I. p. lviii. 8vo. Aberdeen edit.

to advance, they would all be found to lean on a falſe hypotheſis.

'Firſt, it is falſe that the concerns of the ſoul and eternity fall under the cognizance and juriſdiction of the magiſtrate. To ſay that they do, is to blend the very different and hardly compatible characters of magiſtrate and paſtor in the ſame perſon; or, which is worſe, to graft the latter upon the former, the ſure method of producing a moſt abſurd and cruel deſpotiſm, ſuch as obtains in all Mahometan countries. Nor is that much better which prevails more or leſs in popiſh countries, eſpecially in the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, and in Spain and Portugal, where the magiſtrate is grafted on the paſtor, or rather on the prieſt.

'Secondly, it is falſe that ſpiritual concerns, if they did fall under the cognizance of the magiſtrate, are capable of being regulated by ſuch expedients as are proper for reſtraining the injuries of violence and fraud, and preſerving tranquillity and good order in ſociety. Though, by coercion, crimes which are outward and overt acts may effectually be reſtrained, it is not by coercion that thoſe inward effects can be produced, conviction in the underſtanding, or converſion in the heart. Now theſe in religion are all in all. By racks and gibbets, fire and faggot, we may as rationally propoſe to mend the ſight of a man who ſquints or is purblind, as by theſe means to enlighten the infidel's or the heretic's underſtanding, confute his errors, and bring him to the belief of what he diſ-

believed before. That by such methods he may be constrained to profess what he disbelieves still, nobody can deny or even doubt. But to extort a hypocritical profession, is so far from being to promote the cause of God and religion, that nothing, by the acknowledgment of men of all parties, can stand more directly in opposition to it. 'Nothing is so voluntary as religion,' says Lactantius, 'in which, if the mind of the worshipper is constrained the service is nothing *.'

Mr Locke speaks the same language. 'This,' says he, 'being not a proper place to enquire into the marks of the true church, I will only mind those that contend so earnestly for the decrees of their own society, and that cry out continually, 'the church, the church,' with as much noise, and perhaps upon the same principle as the Ephesian silversmiths did with their Diana.—This, I say, I desire to mind them of, that the gospel frequently declares that the true disciples of Christ must suffer persecution; but that the church of Christ should persecute others, and force others by fire and sword to embrace her faith and doctrine, I could never yet find in any of the books of the New Testament †.'

Experience should have taught men ere now, that all persecution for religious opinions is im-

* Nihil est tam voluntarium quam religio, in qua, si animus sacrificantis aversus est, jam sublata, jam nulla est.——Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 289,—292.

† Locke on Toleration, p. 50, 51.

proper. One very obvious consequence of admitting it in any case is, that it is fully as likely to be employed in favour of error as of truth; witness the thousands who have died as martyrs for Jesus. The inconsistency of those who have employed force in religion, is abundantly manifest. Their zeal has ever been directed against those who separated from their communion, while they have tolerated the most flagitious conduct in such as adhered to them. This is very properly reprobated in the following quotation from Mr Locke. Since his days a great change for the better has taken place, but still the spirit he condemns exists in a certain degree.

'Though the divisions that are amongst sects should be allowed to be never so obstructive of the salvation of souls, yet nevertheless "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and such like things, cannot be denied to be works of the flesh;" concerning which the apostle has expressly declared, that "they who do them shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. Whosoever therefore is sincerely solicitous about the kingdom of God, and thinks it his duty to endeavour the enlargement of it amongst men, ought to apply himself with no less care and industry to the rooting out of these immoralities, than to the extirpation of sects. But if any one do otherwise, and whilst he is cruel and implacable towards those that differ from him in opinion, he be indulgent to such iniquities and

immoralities as are unbecoming the name of a Chriſtian, let ſuch a one talk never ſo much of the church, he plainly demonſtrates by his actions that it is another kingdom he aims at, and not the advancement of the kingdom of God.——

'If any one maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and ſword to profeſs certain doctrines, and conform to this or that exterior worſhip, without any regard had unto their morals; if any one endeavour to convert thoſe that are erroneous unto the faith, by forcing them to profeſs things that they do not believe, and allowing them to practiſe things that the goſpel does not permit, it cannot be doubted indeed but ſuch a one is deſirous to have a numerous aſſembly joined in the ſame profeſſion with himſelf; but that he principally intends by thoſe means to compoſe a truly Chriſtian church, is altogether incredible. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if thoſe who do not really contend for the advancement of the true religion, and of the church of Chriſt, make uſe of arms that do not belong to the Chriſtian warfare. If, like the Captain of our ſalvation, they ſincerely deſired the good of ſouls, they would tread in the ſteps, and follow the perfect example of that Prince of peace, who ſent out his ſoldiers to the ſubduing of nations, and gathering them into his church, not armed with the ſword, or other inſtruments of force, but prepared with the goſpel of peace, and with the exemplary holineſs of their converſation. This was his method.

Though if infidels were to be converted by force, if thoſe that are either blind or obſtinate were to be drawn off from their errors by armed ſoldiers, we know very well that it was much more eaſy for him to do it with armies of heavenly legions, than for any ſon of the church, how potent ſoever, with all his dragoons *.'

In anſwer to all the objections againſt ſuch eſtabliſhments, we are reminded of the ſtate of Iſrael of old. There has been a great propenſity in men to turn back to the weak and beggarly elements of the Jewiſh ſyſtem, an error often condemned in the New Teſtament. Arguments drawn from the Jewiſh economy are indeed leſs frequent now than formerly. We are told, however, that under the goſpel it is predicted that kings ſhould be the nurſing fathers, and queens the nurſing mothers of the church, Iſa. xlix. 23. To ſay nothing of the figurative language of prophecy, and of the frequent alluſion to Jewiſh cuſtoms when goſpel times are deſcribed, the obvious meaning of this paſſage, taken in its connection, is, that the ſubjects of the Gentile princes, *i. e.* thoſe nurſed by them, ſhould augment the number of the true worſhippers of God. But if any chuſe to maintain it to mean that the increaſe of the church is to be the conſequence of the piety and zeal of kings and queens, I do not ſee that it will affect our argument. Suppoſing a king to ariſe, *e. g.* in Spain, who, to juſt views of the nature of

* Locke on Toleration, p 19,—21. 22,—25.

Chriſt's kingdom, and eminent piety, added an ardent zeal for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, and a great and comprehenſive genius. He aboliſhes the inquiſition—circulates the Scriptures throughout the country, encourages ſchools, and patroniſes learning. By the wiſdom of his civil government he ameliorates the ſtate of the people, and thus excites the ſpirit of inquiry. By adorning the doctrine, and himſelf ſubmitting to every ordinance of Chriſt, he makes his light to ſhine before men, and, as a zealous Chriſtian, encourages every ſcriptural exertion for the ſpread of the goſpel. Might not ſuch a king be called a nurſing father to the church? and yet there is nothing done by him which reſembles any [redacted] civil religious eſtabliſhment upon earth; there are here no new regulations made for churches, no civil pains or penalties, no diſqualifications for office, no confounding the character of a man as a Chriſtian and as a citizen. All the influence a Chriſtian ought to enjoy in ſuch a ſituation is employed, while civil authority is never introduced in matters of religion.

But we are told, that the Lord has not left eſtabliſhed churches, that he has ſtill his people in them, and bleſſes his own word among all denominations. This is true of the Roman catholic denomination as well as of other eſtabliſhed churches; and if it prove any thing it will prove too much for thoſe who uſually allege it. God has had his people in that church which is the mother of abo-

minations, in every age. It appears from Scripture, that some of his people will continue in the most corrupt societies, as Lot did in Sodom, till the very eve of their destruction. It is written, just before the destruction of Babylon, There was a voice, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4.

God does indeed countenance his own word; but does God therefore countenance the corruptions of every society in which individuals may proclaim his word, or a part of it? for in corrupt societies they cannot proclaim the whole. The reformers were converted while members of the church of Rome, but did this afford a reason why they should not separate from it? A man being converted by the preaching of the gospel, is no evidence that the preacher is a member of a church of Christ, nor is it an evidence that he is an approved minister of th gospel. It is an evidence that he preached some part of the truth of God, but not that those who heard him, and who believed, ought to remain in the same corrupt connection in which he is.

But the effect of the union of church and state is not only hurtful to Christians, and unfavourable to the success of the gospel, but is extremely pernicious to civil society. The contrary has often been boldly asserted, and civil governments have been alarmed, commonly by the c lumnies of clergymen, in opposition to the enemies of

civil religious eſtabliſhments; but if impartially conſidered, it will appear inconteſtable. The genuine tendency of the doctrine of Chriſt, is to make men quiet and peaceable ſubjects even under grievous oppreſſion. This is manifeſt in the conduct of the firſt Chriſtians, as well as from the poſitive precepts of Scripture upon the ſubject. All that the followers of Jeſus deſired, in the firſt ages, was to lead quiet and peaceable lives under thoſe whom God had ſet over them, and whom they reckoned the miniſters of God to them for good, Rom. xiii. 4. and for whom they accordingly gave thanks. They would not indeed be drawn into idolatry; they would rather part with their ſubſtance, or loſe their lives. Whenever obedience to magiſtrates implied rebellion againſt God, they were ready to reſiſt unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin, Heb. xii. 4.*

It was not till Conſtantine converted Chriſtianity into a ſtate-engine, that profeſſed Chriſtians began to make religion a cloak for ſedition and rebellion againſt Government. How ſucceſsfully it has ſince that been employed to produce revolutions and civil wars in almoſt every country where it has been eſtabliſhed by civil authority, may be ſeen by peruſing their hiſtory. The change which took place in the views of Chriſtians concerning ſubjection to Government, after its eſtabliſhment, is thus deſcribed by Dr Middleton. 'Julian's death was foretold by viſions and divine revelations, as the eccleſiaſtical writers inform us, to

* This does not mean to fight, but to ſuffer for their religion.

ſeveral other ſaints and holy men, in different parts of the world, who were ſeverally addreſſing their prayers to God for his deſtruction. Whence we cannot but obſerve what a total change there was, both of principles and practice, between the fathers of the fourth century, and thoſe of the preceding ages; or between the church when perſecuted, and when eſtabliſhed in power and authority. For in the earlier times, under the very worſt of the heathen emperors, and the cruelſt perſecutors of the church, when the Chriſtians were treated every where as traitors to the government, all their apologiſts, through the three firſt centuries, declare with one voice, that they were obliged, by the precepts of their religion, to be of all men the moſt loyal to their princes, and that it was their daily practice, to put up their united prayers for their proſperity. 'We pray,' ſays Tertullian, 'for every emperor; that he may have a long life, a ſecure reign, a ſafe houſe, ſtrong armies, a faithful ſenate, honeſt people, a quiet world, and whatſoever elſe, man, or Ceſar himſelf can wiſh.' Yet, after the church had gained a firm eſtabliſhment, its temper was quite altered; and the emperors no ſooner began to give them any diſturbance, than their prayers were turned into curſes, and the divine vengeance confeſſedly implored to deſtroy them *.'

Archimedes ſaid he could move the world, if he had but a ſituation on which to place his

* Middleton's Inquiry, p. 156, 157.

lever. The inviſible world, ſo clearly revealed in the goſpel, afforded the emperor, as has been juſtly obſerved, what the philoſopher had deſired; but the prieſts ſoon got poſſeſſion of the mighty engine, and in every country where Chriſtianity has been profeſſed, revolutions and convulſions have been the effect of the ſtruggle for what has abſurdly enough been termed, ſpiritual power. Hence, notwithſtanding the effect of the goſpel upon individuals, and its tendency, when genuine and uncorrupted, to promote the preſent welfare of ſociety, governments have been more expoſed to danger ſince its promulgation than before. Nor is this to be wondered at. The ſword has not only been employed to make converts, but an order of men has been raiſed up in every country, claiming privileges independent of the civil magiſtrate, who, if not taken into alliance with him, have, by their intrigues working on the ſuperſtition of the people, diſturbed or overturned his government. That ſuch ſhould be the effect of Chriſtianity being eſtabliſhed by civil authority, is what we might have expected. If the church has obtained certain civil privileges by being incorporated with the ſtate, ſhe will naturally be jealous of her prerogatives. Should any other religion, or any different modification of the ſame religion, prevail, it may in its turn be adopted by the ſtate, and conſequently care muſt be taken to preſerve the ſuperiority which the eſtabliſhed church has acquired.

We have seen how unacquainted the reformers were with the true principles of toleration, and where these are not understood, good men will be led to wish for the overthrow of any government, by which, in their view, an improper system is established. If indeed such establishments were agreeable to the mind of Christ, and compatible with the nature of his kingdom, it would be our duty to desire to see them carried into effect, and if an improper form of Christianity was established unfavourable to religion, or not so favourable as another, a zealous Christian could not but contemplate with complacency a revolution which should set things on a better footing. This perhaps may be exemplified in the following extract from the life of Mr Boston, *sen.* written by himself. 'From that time (1704) I had little fondness for national churches, strictly and properly so called, as of equal latitude with the nations, and wished for an amendment of our own church, as to the constitution thereof.' Again he writes, 'Having been, almost ever since my entering into the ministry, dissatisfied with several things in our constitution, especially the manner of admitting to the Lord's table and planting of churches, I embraced that opportunity to endeavour to get such things rectified; and accordingly I did, sometime after, apply myself closely to consider of these overtures, and wrote several remarks on them, together with new overtures for admission to the Lord's table, and debarring from

it; the which are to be found among my papers, App. No. 3. Howbeit the ſynod did not call for them. Nevertheleſs, by order of our preſbytery, they were laid before the commiſſion, or their committee appointed to receive ſuch remarks; but the matter was dropped, and, for any thing I know, no more inſiſted on ſince that time. And I apprehend the malady will be incurable till the preſent conſtitution be violently thrown down *.

The connexion of this worthy man with an eſtabliſhment, it thus appears, led him to look forward to a political convulſion as the only cure for the diſorders of the church of Scotland. In this, perhaps, he was right. But had he taken his views of a church of Chriſt entirely from the New Teſtament, a revolution in the ſtate would neither have appeared neceſſary nor deſirable for the intereſts of religion. Chriſtianity proſpered much under a moſt deſpotic government, adminiſtered by the worſt of men, which proves what we already noticed, that its proſperity does not depend upon external circumſtances.

Toleration is now better underſtood, but laws for toleration in religion are, in fact, a cure for a diſeaſe which we ourſelves have induced. Did lawgivers and magiſtrates confine themſelves to the province aſſigned to them by God, laws for toleration in religion would be unneceſſary. The following ſentiments of Mr Locke on this ſubject, well deſerve the attention of the reader. 'Now,

* Memoirs of Mr Boſton's Life, &c. p. 177. 351. Edin. 1776.

that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concernments; and that all civil power, right, and dominion, is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things, and that it neither can, nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls, these following considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

'First, Because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel any one to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the 'consent of the people;' because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation, as blindly to leave it to the choice of any other, whether prince or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace; for no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing. Whatever profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our mind that the one is true, and the other well-pleasing unto God, such profession and such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation. For in this manner, instead of expiating

other ſins by the exerciſe of religion *; I ſay, in offering thus unto God Almighty ſuch a worſhip as we eſteem to be diſpleaſing unto him, we add unto the number of our other ſins thoſe alſo of hypocriſy, and contempt of his divine majeſty.

'In the ſecond place, The care of ſouls cannot belong to the civil magiſtrate, becauſe his power conſiſts only in outward force; but true and ſaving religion conſiſts in the inward perſuaſion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And ſuch is the nature of the underſtanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of any thing by outward force. Confiſcation of eſtate, impriſonment, torments, nothing of that nature can have any ſuch efficacy, as to make men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things.

'It may indeed be alleged, that the magiſtrate may make uſe of arguments, and thereby draw the heterodox into the way of truth, and procure their ſalvation. I grant it; but this is common to him with other men. In teaching, inſtructing, and redreſſing the erroneous by reaſon, he may certainly do what becomes any good man to do. Magiſtracy does not oblige him to put off either humanity or Chriſtianity. But it is one thing to perſuade, another to command; one thing to preſs with arguments, another with penalties. This

* We would not be underſtood to adopt this language, nor the ſentiment it expreſſes. There is but one expiation for ſin, the blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

the civil power alone has a right to do; to the other, good-will is authority enough. Every man has commiſſion to admoniſh, exhort, convince another of error, and by reaſoning to draw him into truth; but to give laws, receive obedience, and compel with the ſword, belongs to none but the magiſtrate. And upon this ground I affirm, that the magiſtrate's power extends not to the eſtabliſhing of any articles of faith, or forms of worſhip, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this caſe are abſolutely impertinent, becauſe they are not proper to convince the mind. Neither the profeſſion of any articles of faith, nor the conformity to any outward form of worſhip, (as has already been ſaid) can be available to the ſalvation of ſouls, unleſs the truth of the one, and the acceptableneſs of the other unto God, be thoroughly believed by thoſe that ſo profeſs and practiſe. But penalties are no ways capable to produce ſuch belief. It is only light and evidence that can work a change in mens opinions; and that light can in no manner proceed from corporal ſufferings, or any other outward penalties.

'In the third place, The care of the ſalvation of men's ſouls cannot belong to the magiſtrate, becauſe, though the rigour of the laws, and the force of penalties, were capable to convince and change mens minds, yet would not that help at all to the ſalvation of their ſouls. For there being

but one truth, one way to heaven, what hope is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court, and were put under a neceſſity to quit the light of their own reaſon, to oppoſe the dictates of their own conſciences, and blindly to reſign up themſelves to the will of their governors, and to the religion which either ignorance, ambition, or ſuperſtition had chanced to eſtabliſh in the countries where they were born? In the variety and contradiction of opinions in religion, wherein the princes of the world are as much divided as in their ſecular intereſts, the narrow way would be much ſtraitened. One country alone would be in the right, and all the reſt of the world would be put under an obligation of following their princes in the ways that lead to deſtruction. And that which heightens the abſurdity, and very ill ſuits the notion of a Deity, men would owe their eternal happineſs or miſery to the places of their nativity.

'Theſe conſiderations, to omit many others that might have been urged to the ſame purpoſe, ſeem unto me ſufficient to conclude, that all the power of civil government relates only to mens civil intereſts, is confined to the care of the things of this world, and hath nothing to do with the world to come.'———

'You will ſay, 'By this rule, if ſome congregations ſhould have a mind to ſacrifice infants, or,' (as the primitive Chriſtians were falſely accuſed)

'luſtfully pollute themſelves in promiſcuous uncleanneſs, or practiſe any other ſuch heinous enormities, is the magiſtrate obliged to tolerate them, becauſe they are committed in a religious aſſembly?' I anſwer, No. Theſe things are not lawful in the ordinary courſe of life, nor in any private houſe; and therefore neither are they ſo in the worſhip of God, or in any religious meeting. But indeed if any people, congregated upon account of religion, ſhould be deſirous to ſacrifice a calf, I deny that that ought to be prohibited by a law. Melibæus, whoſe calf it is, may lawfully kill his own calf at home, and burn any part of it that he thinks fit; for no injury is thereby done to any one, no prejudice to another man's goods; and for the ſame reaſon he may kill his calf alſo in a religious meeting. Whether the doing ſo be well-pleaſing to God, or no, it is their part to conſider that do it. The part of the magiſtrate is only to take care that the commonwealth receive no prejudice, and that there be no injury done to any man, either in life or eſtate. And thus what may be ſpent on a feaſt, may be ſpent on a ſacrifice. But if, peradventure, ſuch were the ſtate of things, that the intereſt of the commonwealth required all ſlaughter of beaſts ſhould be forborne for ſome while, in order to the increaſing of the ſtock of cattle that had been deſtroyed by ſome extraordinary murrain, who ſees not that the magiſtrate, in ſuch a caſe, may forbid all his ſubjects to kill any calves, for any uſe whatſoever? Only

it is to be obſerved, that in this caſe the law is not made about a religious, but a political matter; nor is the ſacrifice, but the ſlaughter of calves, thereby prohibited.'———

'But, to come to particulars, I ſay, firſt, No opinions contrary to human ſociety, or to thoſe moral rules which are neceſſary to the preſervation of civil ſociety, are to be tolerated by the magiſtrate. But of theſe, indeed, examples in any church are rare; for no ſect can eaſily arrive to ſuch a degree of madneſs, as that it ſhould think fit to teach, for doctrines of religion, ſuch things as manifeſtly undermine the foundations of ſociety, and are therefore condemned by the judgment of all mankind; becauſe their own intereſt, peace, reputation, every thing, would be thereby endangered.

'Another more ſecret evil, but more dangerous to the commonwealth is, when men arrogate to themſelves, and to thoſe of their own ſect, ſome peculiar prerogative, covered over with a ſpecious ſhew of deceitful words, but in effect oppoſite to the civil right of the community. For example, we cannot find any ſect that teaches expreſsly and openly, that men are not obliged to keep their promiſe, that princes may be dethroned by thoſe that differ from them in religion, or that the dominion of all things belongs only to themſelves. For theſe things, propoſed thus nakedly and plainly, would ſoon draw on them the eye and hand of the magiſtrate, and awaken all the care

of the commonwealth to a watchfulneſs againſt the ſpreading of ſo dangerous an evil. But, nevertheleſs, we find thoſe that ſay the ſame things in other words. What elſe do they mean who teach, 'that faith is not to be kept with heretics?' Their meaning, forſooth, is, that the privilege of breaking faith belongs unto themſelves; for they declare all that are not of their communion to be heretics, or at leaſt they declare them ſo whenſoever they think fit. What can be the meaning of their aſſerting, 'that kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms?' It is evident that they thereby arrogate unto themſelves the power of depoſing kings; becauſe they challenge the power of excommunication as the peculiar right of their hierarchy. 'That dominion is founded in grace,' is alſo an aſſertion by which thoſe that maintain it do plainly lay claim to the poſſeſſion of all things; for they are not ſo wanting to themſelves as not to believe, or at leaſt as not to profeſs themſelves to be the truly pious and faithful. Theſe, therefore, and the like, who attribute unto the faithful, religious and orthodox, that is, in plain terms, unto themſelves, any peculiar privilege or power above other mortals in civil concernments; or who, upon pretence of religion, do challenge any manner of authority over ſuch as are not aſſociated with them in their eccleſiaſtical communion: I ſay, theſe have no right to be tolerated by the magiſtrate, as neither thoſe that will not own and teach the duty of to-

lerating all men in matters of mere religion. For what do all these and the like doctrines signify, but that those men may, and are ready, upon any occasion, to seize the government, and possess themselves of the estates and fortunes of their fellow-subjects, and that they only ask leave to be tolerated by the magistrate so long, until they find themselves strong enough to effect it*?'

Such are the wise and upright reasonings of this great man. But it must be owned that he did not pursue them to their consequences. He would have seen, if he had done so, 'that intolerance, in some degree, necessarily proceeds from religious establishments, and that these cannot fail to cherish it, both in states and in individuals. Have not we ourselves seen instances in this country of persons being turned out of their farms for not adhering to the established church—and of the most slanderous reports being propagated respecting the disaffection to Government, of loyal subjects, purely because they could not in conscience remain in it†? These proceedings

* Locke on Toleration, p. 30,—39. 119,—122. 162,—167.

† As might be expected, those who have not only separated from the establishment, but also from all bodies resembling it, have in the most explicit manner maintained the duty of Christians to obey and honour the Government on scriptural grounds. The more excellent we esteem our civil constitution to be, the more grateful to God we will be for it. But obedience to our governors stands upon a different foundation; namely, the express commandments of God, which are equally binding on every Christian under every form of government. These, like many

are indeed inconſiſtent with the mild and juſt ſpirit of our happy government, but they are the neceſſary effects of a civil eſtabliſhment of religion.

The feuds and contentions excited by the union of church and ſtate, are well deſcribed by Mr Locke. 'Let us therefore,' ſays he, 'deal plainly. The magiſtrate is afraid of other churches, but not of his own, becauſe he is kind and favourable to the one, but ſevere and cruel to the other. Theſe he treats like children, and indulges them in wantonneſs; thoſe he uſes as ſlaves, and how blameleſsly ſoever they demean themſelves, recompenſes them no otherwiſe than by gallies, priſons, confiſcations and death. Theſe he cheriſhes and defends; thoſe he continually ſcourges and oppreſſes. Let

other of Chriſt's precepts, are abſurd in the eyes of worldly men, and of not a few profeſſed Chriſtians. They ſeem to imply indifference about good government; but this is by no means the caſe. Chriſtians may and muſt feel the difference between a good and a bad government, but under both they are to ſubmit, or quietly leave the country. Although this ſentiment ſecures the ſubjection of Chriſtians, ſo far as they are influenced by the authority of God, yet it is often not very agreeable, even to governors, becauſe it pays them no compliment, but ſubmits equally to the evil and the froward as to the gentle and the good. It will be found, however, to be the only ſteady principle of obedience. Nothing is ſo fluctuating as human opinion. The man who admired the conſtitution to-day, may, through ſome diſguſt he has conceived, abhor it to-morrow. If the precept to obey governors only regards thoſe who are good, the word of God may be quoted at all times in vindication of ſedition and rebellion, for no one rebels againſt a government which he thinks good ——See Mr Ewing and Mr Braidwood's Sermons, and Addreſs on Political Opinions by Mr R. Haldane.

him turn the tables, or let thoſe diſſenters enjoy but the ſame privileges in civils as his other ſubjects, and he will quickly find that theſe religious meetings will be no longer dangerous; for if men enter into ſeditious conſpiracies, it is not religion that inſpires them to it in their meetings, but their ſufferings and oppreſſions that make them willing to eaſe themſelves. Juſt and moderate governments are every where quiet, every where ſafe; but oppreſſion raiſes ferments, and makes men ſtruggle to caſt off an uneaſy and tyrannical yoke. I know that ſeditions are very frequently raiſed upon pretence of religion; but it is as true, that for religion ſubjects are frequently ill-treated, and live miſerably. Believe me, the ſtirs that are made proceed not from any peculiar temper of this or that church or religious ſociety, but from the common diſpoſition of all mankind, who, when they groan under any heavy burden, endeavour naturally to ſhake off the yoke that galls their necks. Suppoſe this buſineſs of religion were let alone, and that there were ſome other diſtinction made between men and men, upon account of their different complexions, ſhapes, and features, ſo that thoſe who have black hair, for example, or grey eyes, ſhould not enjoy the ſame privileges as other citizens, that they ſhould not be permitted either to buy or ſell, or live by their calling; that parents ſhould not have the government and education of their own children; that they ſhould either be excluded from the benefit of

the laws, or meet with partial judges—can it be doubted but these persons, thus distinguished from others by the colour of their hair and their eyes, and united together by one common persecution, would be as dangerous to the magistrate as any others that had associated themselves merely upon the account of religion? Some enter into company for trade and profit; others, for want of business, have their clubs for claret; neighbourhood joins some, and religion others. But there is one only thing which gathers people into seditious commotions, and that is oppression.

'You will say, 'What! will you have people to meet at divine service against the magistrate's will?' I answer, Why, I pray, against his will? Is it not both lawful and necessary that they should meet? Against his will, do you say? that is what I complain of. That is the very root of all the mischief. Why are assemblies less sufferable in a church than in a theatre or market? Those that meet there are not either more vicious or more turbulent than those that meet elsewhere. The business in that is, that they are ill-used, and therefore they are not to be suffered. Take away the partiality that is used towards them in matters of common right, change the laws, take away the penalties unto which they are subjected, and all things will immediately become safe and peaceable. Nay, those that are averse to the religion of the magistrate will think themselves so much the more bound to maintain

the peace of the commonwealth, as their condition is better in that place than elſewhere; and all the ſeveral ſeparate congregations, like ſo many guardians of the public peace, will watch one another, that nothing may be innovated or changed in the government; becauſe they can hope for nothing better than what they already enjoy, that is, an equal condition with their fellow-ſubjects, under a juſt and moderate government. Now, if that church which agrees in religion with the prince be eſteemed the chief ſupport of any civil government, and that for no other reaſon, as has already been ſhewn, than becauſe the prince is kind and the laws are favourable to it, how much greater will be the ſecurity of a government, where all good ſubjects, of whatſoever church they be, without any diſtinction upon account of religion, enjoying the ſame favour with the prince, and the ſame benefit of the laws, ſhall become the common ſupport and guard of it, and where none will have any occaſion to fear the ſeverity of the laws but thoſe that do injuries to their neighbours, and offend againſt the civil peace.'———

'We muſt therefore ſeek another cauſe of thoſe evils that are charged upon religion; and if we conſider right, we ſhall find it to conſiſt wholly in the ſubject that I am at preſent treating of. It is not the diverſity of opinions, which cannot be avoided, but the refuſal of toleration to thoſe that are of different opinions, which might have been

granted, that has produced all the buſtles and wars that have been in the Chriſtian world upon account of religion. The heads and leaders of the church, moved by avarice and inſatiable deſire of dominion, making uſe of the immoderate ambition of magiſtrates, and the credulous ſuperſtition of the giddy multitude, have incenſed and animated them againſt thoſe that diſſent from themſelves, by preaching unto them, contrary to the laws of the goſpel, and to the precepts of charity, that ſchiſmatics and heretics are to be rooted out of their poſſeſſions, and deſtroyed. And thus have they mixed together, and confounded two things that are in themſelves moſt different, the church and the commonwealth. Now, as it is very difficult for men patiently to ſuffer themſelves to be ſtripped of the goods which they have got by their honeſt induſtry, and, contrary to all the laws of equity, both human and divine, to be delivered up for a prey to other mens violence and rapine, eſpecially when they are otherwiſe altogether blameleſs, and that the occaſion for which they are thus treated does not at all belong to the juriſdiction of the magiſtrate, but entirely to the conſcience of every particular man, for the conduct of which he is accountable to God only: What elſe can be expected, but that theſe men, growing weary of the evils under which they labour, ſhould in the end think it lawful for them to reſiſt force with force, and to defend their natural rights, which are not forfeitable upon ac-

count of religion, with arms, as well as they can? That this has been hitherto the ordinary courſe of things, is abundantly evident in hiſtory, and that it will continue to be ſo hereafter is but too apparent in reaſon. It cannot indeed be otherwiſe, ſo long as the principle of perſecution for religion ſhall prevail, as it has done hitherto with magiſtrate and people, and ſo long as thoſe that ought to be the preachers of peace and concord ſhall continue, with all their art and ſtrength, to excite men to arms, and ſound the trumpet of war *.'

I am perſuaded no apology is neceſſary for enriching theſe pages with extracts from a work which firſt gave to this country the tone of moderation, the fruits of which we enjoy, and for which we have abundant cauſe to be thankful. Whether then we conſider the effect of religious eſtabliſhments upon Chriſtians—on the ſucceſs of the goſpel—or upon the peace of ſociety, we ſhall ſee reaſon to conclude, that, as they are unſcriptural, they are alſo hurtful. The quietneſs and peace which we have ſo long enjoyed in this country, have ariſen in a great meaſure from the ample toleration with which we are favoured. When we look forward, the proſpect is pleaſing; Chriſtians ſeem daily to be increaſing in the knowledge of the Scriptures reſpecting this ſubject, and many of them ſee it their duty and privilege to withdraw from a ſituation ſo unfriendly to their growth in grace.

* Locke on Toleration, pp. 177,—185. 192,—197.

Our rulers need not be alarmed by this defection. Thoſe who follow the word of God will never endeavour by violence or intrigue to overturn the religious eſtabliſhment, however much they may diſapprove of it. Even politicians ſeem to be more and more perſuaded of the impropriety of interfering with men about religion, and the more they act upon this principle, the better opportunity will they have to obſerve the happy effects of the goſpel on ſociety.

Magiſtrates have acted over again the fable of the hen which laid the golden eggs. The boy, not ſatisfied with an egg a day, killed the hen that he might receive the whole treaſure at once, and thus loſt all. Had the rulers of the world left religion to itſelf, they would have reaped the advantage of it; but graſping at too much—attempting to employ it as an engine of ſtate, it has recoiled upon themſelves, and filled the world with bloodſhed and miſery.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus attempted to ſtate the account in the word of God of the ſocial worſhip and ordinances obſerved by the firſt Chriſtians, I cannot conclude without addreſſing a few words to my brethren in Chriſt. How beautifully ſimple are all the ordinances of Jeſus! How much adapted to every ſituation in which we can be placed! We may conſider them as ſo many channels through which the Lord communicates ſpiritual bleſſings to his people. Our obligation to obſerve them, however, does not reſt on their ſuitableneſs, or on the benefit which we are likely to receive from them. They are all enjoined by the Lord, and if we obſerve them from regard to his authority, we ſhall experience the bleſſings connected with them. "If a man love me," ſaid Jeſus, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. Thus has he connected our growth in grace and our experience of his power to ſave, with obedience to his commandments. Let us never forget then that all the ordinances of Chriſt are inſtituted for our good; that we may be more delivered from the power of ſin; that our fellowſhip may be with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt; that

we may be more weaned from the world, and prepared for the inheritance of ſaints in light. If theſe important conſiderations be not habitually kept in view, we ſhall be in danger of perverting and abuſing the ordinances; they will become a mere bodily ſervice, and we ſhall conſequently derive little or no benefit from them.

This publication may fall into the hands of ſome Chriſtians who are connected with churches of a very different complexion from thoſe delineated in the foregoing pages. I am far from wiſhing you, my brethren, to walk by my light. I only requeſt you to enquire "what ſaith the Scripture?" It is unworthy your character, as believers, to treat any thing connected with religion with indifference. We ought ever to tremble at the word of God, and to remember that it is our duty to liſten with the moſt ſerious attention to whatever our great Lawgiver has condeſcended to teach. A diſtinction of greater and leſs amongſt the commandments of Chriſt has been admitted to a certain extent. This is ſupported by the word of God; but how much has it been abuſed by men—how much has it been miſapplied even by the diſciples of Jeſus? What are called his leſſer commandments have been treated as matters of indifference, deſerving neither attention nor ſerious regard. Let us remember however that they are all greatly important, that they all deſerve our moſt ſerious conſidera-

tion, and that the wilful neglect of any of them is rebellion againſt the Lord.

Under the law, preſumptuous ſins might be committed in things not in themſelves of any importance. To have neglected wilfully any of the purifications preſcribed by Moſes, which could only ſanctify to the purifying of the fleſh, would have been to deſpiſe the word of the Lord, and that ſoul would have been cut off. We are under a better and more excellent diſpenſation, by which we receive not the ſpirit of bondage unto fear, but the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father; but our God is alſo a conſuming fire, and it is needful for us to worſhip him with reverence and godly fear.

Ye are not ignorant, beloved, of Satan's devices, nor of the deceitfulneſs of your own hearts. Ye know how apt we all are to impoſe upon ourſelves and to omit or neglect whatever duty our circumſtances render peculiarly diſagreeable. So far as I can judge from my own obſervation, few Chriſtians who have examined the ſubject of the foregoing pages with any attention, are fully ſatisfied in their minds, while continuing in unſcriptural churches. Although the form of theſe churches remains the ſame as it was two hundred years ago, the degree of information poſſeſſed by believers connected with them is very different. Formerly they thought they did God ſervice in fighting with the ſword againſt error and hereſy. Ye know that the weapons of our warfare are not

carnal. They considered toleration as a crying sin; ye condemn persecution for religion, and yet many of you continue members of churches, which instead of holding forth in their standards the form of sound words, declare that the magistrate hath authority, and ought to suppress all heresy *. They considered classical presbytery as almost essential to Christianity; many of you are persuaded that the word of God gives it no countenance, and yet ye remain in churches under such jurisdiction.

Let me intreat you seriously to consider the effects of your conduct. Beware of resisting conviction, of trifling with light on matters of everlasting importance to yourselves and others. Candidly examine the subject by the unerring word of prophecy. Ye say, perhaps, that 'you cannot perceive any distinct and positive rules on this subject in the Scriptures: it would have been more clearly delineated, if God had intended us to walk by it.' But consider, in what temper have you searched for it? Was it under the influence of prejudice, and a desire to be established in your preconceived opinions? Was it while acting in some respects contrary to your convictions of duty? Was it under the impression of the fear of man, or the dread of losing your friends, your respectability, your usefulness †, or

* See Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii.

† The idea of maintaining our *usefulness* at the expence of any part of duty, is perhaps the most subtle mode in which self-

your emoluments? If so, it is not to be wondered at that ye can perceive no rule for the social worship of believers in the word of God. He who hesitates between God and the world will necessarily, whatever his suspicions concerning duty may have been, be unstable in all his ways. Let not that man expect to receive wisdom from the Lord. He doth not ask in faith. But if it be your desire to know the will of Christ, be the consequences what they may; if ye are determined to go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach; if ye disregard the honour which cometh from men, when compared with the honour which cometh from God only; if in this temper ye will search the Scriptures, with prayer to the Father of lights, ye shall find new cause to admire the faithfulness of him of whom Moses, in this and every other respect, was but the shadow.

Ye will see by what goes before, that the charge of party-spirit, when endeavouring to lead men to obey the truth, gives me no uneasiness on my own account. Consistent believers in Jesus

righteousness works. It discovers at bottom much unbelief and want of confidence, both in the wisdom and power of the Lord, and it is a dreadful deception we put upon our own minds, and highly derogatory to the honour of God whenever we act on the principle that the plans of his government will be best promoted by dispensing with any of his laws. Yet the plea of usefulness in excuse for adhering to Antichristian connections, and retaining Antichristian situations, is the last resort of many a galled conscience.

muſt ever be a party ſpoken againſt by the world lying in wickedneſs, and their zeal for the converſion of ſinners, or for the edification of their Chriſtian brethren, muſt ever be deemed party-ſpirit. Nor muſt they expect altogether to eſcape the cenſure of Chriſtians, while Chriſtians remain ſo much conformed to the world in religion, as well as in other reſpects.

I have, throughout, endeavoured to ſhew how much ſcriptural order and diſcipline promote the experience and power of religion in the hearts of believers, and how abſurd, and even impious, is the idea of Chriſt's leſſer commandments interfering with his greater. No; like a well conſtructed building, where every part mutually ſtrengthens and ſupports the reſt, the commandments of Chriſt are a conſiſtent whole, and where one is neglected, the force of all upon the heart is proportionally weakened. This ſhould excite us to live nearer to God, to ſtudy with more earneſtneſs his bleſſed word, to cry after wiſdom, and lift up our voice for underſtanding; thus ſhall we, more and more, ſee wondrous things in his law, and our hearts be more enlarged to run in the way of his precepts.

We are all but too apt to fall into the ſpirit of the world, to allow our hearts to be overcharged with the cares, the pleaſures, and the entanglements of this life. In proportion as we view eternal things in their reality and importance, the things of time will appear ſmall, and comparatively in-

ſignificant, and when they acquire an undue aſcendency, they draw away our hearts from God, produce a careleſs and lukewarm ſtate of mind, and lead us to trifle with the authority of God our Saviour.

It is incalculable of how much comfort and enjoyment we are deprived, by forgetting the exhortation which ſpeaketh to us as to children, "My ſon, give me thine heart;" that is, by forgetting the firſt and great commandment of the law. Jeſus frequently upbraided his diſciples with their unbelief. What cauſe have we to lament that this ſin ſo eaſily beſets us! To what elſe is it owing, that notwithſtanding all his kindneſs and care, we are ever ſo prone to diſtruſt him, and to ſhrink from what we at leaſt ſuſpect to be the path of duty, by ſaying, "there is a lion in the way, I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets?" Let us truſt in the Lord and do good, and ſo ſhall we dwell in the land, and verily we ſhall be fed. Seek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, and all other things ſhall be added unto you. Let us more decidedly count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus. Let us hear him ſaying, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and in obſerving them, let us work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleaſure.

Perhaps you will ſay, 'We ſee imperfections in

all churches, and therefore we do not think it neceſſary to leave that church with which we are connected. Purity of communion is indeed deſirable, but experience proves it is not attainable.' It would be indeed ſtrange if you did not ſee imperfections in churches compoſed of imperfect and ſinful men. You may ſee alſo imperfections in their mode of adminiſtering ſome of the laws of Chriſt. But they acknowledge no imperfect ſtandard; their ſtandard is the perfect word of God. They are not tied down by precedents to perpetuate error. They profeſs to be ſenſible that they ſtill need inſtruction, and that they are ready, in all things, to ſubmit to it, and you have no reaſon to doubt the truth of their profeſſion. Point out to them wherein they are deficient; ſhew them the more excellent way contained in the Scriptures. If they reject the authority of Chriſt, have no fellowſhip with them, but remember, their obſtinacy will not juſtify you in continuing where there are ſtill greater abominations.

Do not ſay that purity of communion is impracticable. There was ſuch, ſo far as we plead for it, in the apoſtolic churches; there is ſuch in every church of Chriſt attending to his voice. Falſe brethren may unawares creep in, but by the wholeſome diſcipline of Chriſt's houſe, they ſhall, from time to time, be made manifeſt and put away; and thus the believers, ſo far from

being injured, ſhall be warned and profited by their excluſion.

But what ſhall we ſay of thoſe who are ever ready to exclaim againſt the order of the churches with which they are themſelves connected, and to approve of others with which they have no fellowſhip? Is this to tremble at the word of God? Is this to confeſs Chriſt as your Lord and Maſter? Surely this ought not ſo to be. Brethren, let me beſeech you to conſider the importance of attending to all the ordinances of Chriſt in purity. This is much connected with your own progreſs and comfort, and with the ſucceſs of the everlaſting goſpel. Beware then of treating them lightly. Beware of uſing arguments to convince others of the futility of which ye yourſelves are convinced. God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all. Let us walk as children of light. Let us not handle the word of God deceitfully, but by manifeſtation of the truth commend ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God. Let us caſt off the works of darkneſs, and put on the armour of light, earneſtly deſiring to follow God fully ourſelves, and to lead others to be like-minded. In order to do ſo, we muſt take up the croſs. We muſt become aliens perhaps to our mother's brethren, as the Lord became for our ſakes; but greater is he that is with us, than all who can be againſt us. If we forſake houſes, or lands, or friends, for Chriſt's ſake and the goſpel's, we ſhall in the preſent time receive an hundred fold, and

in the world to come life everlaſting. Many difficulties often preſent themſelves to hedge up our way, and to prevent us from walking in the path of duty; but theſe are only trials of our faith. Yet ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, that we are apt to interpret what is diſagreeable to fleſh and blood, as if it were the voice of providence intimating to us that we ought, notwithſtanding our ſcruples, to remain in our preſent ſituation.

There is no doubt that many plauſible things may be ſaid, and have been ſaid againſt the order of a church as recorded in the Scriptures. The plaineſt ſubject may be perplexed by ſubtle diſputants, and by a multitude of words. This is peculiarly the caſe in whatever reſpects religion. Man is naturally prejudiced againſt the whole revelation of God. Although he may appear to approve of ſome doctrines and precepts delivered in the Scriptures, and ſo far to be of one mind with God, there is always an eſſential difference between the true meaning of the doctrines as delivered by God, and their import as apprehended by the natural man. We are ingenious in deviſing objections againſt what we diſlike. While man is ſo ſlow in underſtanding the truth, that nothing ſhort of the Almighty power of God can make him receive it, he is proportionally acute in diſcerning whatever is oppoſed to it; and hence the Lord warns his diſciples, that except they become as little children, they ſhall not enter the

kingdom of heaven; and again it is written, If any man will be wiſe in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wiſe. One of the effects of the goſpel on the heart, is to caſt down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God. The more that we have experienced this, the more doubtful ſhall we be of our own reaſonings, and conſequently the leſs liable to be toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But, be it ſo that the preciſe order of Chriſtian churches may be deemed ambiguous and diſputable, let us at leaſt be conſiſtent in our practice. The ordinances which ye, brethren, obſerve are equally liable to be diſputed with many you neglect. I will venture to ſay, that as ſtrong evidence has been brought forward for various ordinances which you do not obſerve, as you can bring for thoſe you do. While you condemn popiſh tradition in words, you thus juſtify it by your practice, for it is only the ſanction of the Romiſh church which gives various ordinances to which you attach the greateſt reſpect, a ſuperiority over others which you deem to be merely ſtrifes of words, and undeſerving ſerious regard. Such indeed is the prejudice againſt them, that thoſe who obſerve them are conſidered by many Chriſtians as only occupied about the outworks of religion, or perhaps as merely affecting ſingu-

larity. Thus, brethren, do ye caſt a ſtumbling-block in their way, and tempt them to trifle with the convictions of conſcience. How often are our Lord's words miſapplied! "Ye pay tithe," ſaid he to hypocritical profeſſors, "of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Had they neglected tithing theſe things, it would have been highly ſinful; yet this text is often uſed to expoſe attention to what are called ſmaller matters in religion, as if this were the mark of a weak and ſuperſtitious mind.

Let us always remember, that although we are placed under a very different diſpenſation from the Jewiſh, ſo far from our being permitted to trifle with any of the commandments of Jeſus, we are aſſured that the guilt of this is moſt aggravated, and the puniſhment moſt exemplary. "He that deſpiſed Moſes' law died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes; of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 28, 29. I admit that this refers, in the firſt place, to direct apoſtaſy from the profeſſion of the goſpel, but it alſo undoubtedly applies to the contempt of any of the commandments of Jeſus;

for by our obedience we teſtify our love to him, and confeſs his name before men.

Falſe reports, the moſt abſurd and ridiculous, are often propagated reſpecting thoſe churches who obſerve ſcriptural order. Their ſentiments and practice are groſsly miſrepreſented, and this, I doubt not, tends not a little to prejudiſe many againſt them. But remember that Chriſt was blaſphemed as ſtirring up the people, and it was affirmed that his apoſtles ſaid, "Let us do evil that good may come." Men too often juſtify their neglect of the commandment of Chriſt, to turn away from ſuch as have a form of godlineſs but deny the power thereof, 2 Tim. iii. 5. by repreſenting the fellowſhip of ſcriptural churches alſo as impure; but if this were the caſe, it would only prove their inattention to the laws of Chriſt, and would by no means juſtify others in neglecting his authority. While liſtening to or repeating ſuch reports, however, beware leſt ye be actuated by improper motives, and leſt ye have fallen into the ſpirit of the world, which hates the diſciples of Chriſt, becauſe they teſtify againſt them that their deeds are evil.

Permit me now to addreſs thoſe who are members of thoſe churches, whoſe great and profeſſed object it is in all things to form themſelves on the apoſtolic model. Brethren, ye have felt the yoke of Chriſt to be eaſy and his burden light. Your views of the wiſdom of God diſplayed in the Scriptures have been increaſed by your atten-

tion to all his ordinances. Ye have felt the benefit of them in your own experience, and, in consequence of observing them, you are, I trust, more desirous of cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart. Let me remind you, however, that ye have not yet attained, nor are already perfect. Ye have much to learn. Perhaps there are still some ordinances which you neglect, and certainly ye do not perceive the full glory of those which ye do observe.

I cannot forbear calling your attention, my brethren, to what has been already adverted to in these pages respecting the pastoral office. So long as churches are depending on any academies or other human though useful institutions for pastors, so long the work of Christ must be much impeded. Of old, the Lord raised up pastors in the churches in answer to the prayers of his people. But many have no idea of earnest and continual prayer on this account. This arises from remaining darkness in the minds of the children of God. But, brethren, ye have appealed to the word of God. Do not forsake it, and it will prove a lamp to your paths, and a light to your feet. Be not afraid of being misled, by imitating in all things the apostolic churches. From the time you meet together as a regular religious assembly, let it be your prayer to the great Head of his people to supply you with all which he has appointed in his word for the edification of his people. Offer this prayer in the

faith of his promiſes. Obſerve the gifts of the members. Let none remain uncultivated and unoccupied; let all be called into action. Look out among yourſelves for holy men of God, anſwering the deſcription he has given, 1 Tim. iii. Titus i. When you have found them, let ſuch take the overſight of you in dependence on the grace of Jeſus. Give them what aſſiſtance in temporal things is in your power, that they may devote their time to meditation on the word of God, and to every thing which may increaſe their knowledge of it, and enable them to communicate it to you. Do not imagine, my brethren, that this will interfere with the general ſucceſs of the goſpel. By promoting the edification, and increaſing the numbers of the churches, it will greatly advance it. I would not be underſtood as diſſuading you from ſeeking after, and wholly ſupporting a paſtor or paſtors who have received education, and who may be qualified thereby for attracting careleſs ſinners. The two objects are by no means incompatible. Liberal education may give a preacher of the goſpel great advantages. Seminaries of learning are excellent in themſelves when properly conducted; but if they prevent churches from calling to the paſtoral office thoſe who have not been educated in theſe, if they lead them to undervalue the experience and knowledge of advanced diſciples of Chriſt, and to call novices* to the miniſtry of the goſpel, and to the

* By novices I mean young men, or others, lately in the pro-

overſight of the churches, they may be productive of much evil. But this ariſes only from the abuſe of them.

Be contented, brethren, to be learners in the ſchool of Chriſt. The greater progreſs we make in religion, the lower ſhall we be in our own eyes. When you look around you, you muſt ſee the difference which God has made between you and a world lying in wickedneſs, and when you perceive ſo many believers in Chriſt ſtill intoxicated with the poiſon, and fettered in the bondage of Babylon, you muſt be grateful that you are delivered. But be not high-minded. Bleſſed is the man that feareth always. Every part of divine truth is calculated to humble us in the duſt; but ſuch is the corruption of our hearts, that we are ever in danger of being puffed up by reflecting on what we know, and this, if indulged, will blaſt our comfort and progreſs. While you eſteem all the commandments of Chriſt concerning all things to be right, beware of ſtriving for them with a controverſial or dictatorial ſpirit. Beware of haughty, contemptuous, ſelf-ſufficient or angry treatment of thoſe who oppoſe the order you obſerve. Neither the pride nor the wrath of man worketh the righteouſneſs of God, and therefore the ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe who oppoſe themſelves.

feſſion of the truth, without that growth, maturity or trial which can only, uſually, be obtained by time.

There is one way, beloved, by which you may powerfully recommend the inſtitutions of Chriſt. Shew by your conduct the happy effects they have had on you. Shew how much they have taught you to bridle your tongues, to ſpeak evil of no man, to be ready to every good work. Be exemplary in your conduct and converſation in all the various relations in which you ſtand, and ſhew that you are indeed waiting for the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour. Let it be evident that you are not under the dominion of party-ſpirit, that you act under the influence of habitual ſubjection to our Lord. If you are reproached either by Chriſtians or the world, render not railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing.

Remember that the ordinances of Chriſt may be attended to in an improper temper and ſpirit. Some of old preached Chriſt even of envy and ſtrife; but believers are repreſented as caſt into the mould of the goſpel. All the ordinances are intended to perfect the new creation. When a ſinner firſt hears the voice of the Son of God, he may be compared to a block of marble rudely cut into the figure of a man. Many ſtrokes of the chiſſel are ſtill neceſſary to give to all the parts their juſt proportions. Under the hand of the artiſt it gradually advances, and his ſkill appears in the perfection of the reſemblance when the whole is finiſhed. Thus the Lord quickens men dead in treſpaſſes, nor does he for-

ſake the work of his hands till they are like him, bearing the image of the heavenly Adam. To this end are all his ordinances directed. The diſpenſations of his providence promote the ſame object, and he treats us as friends informing us what he has in view, thus encouraging us to work out our own ſalvation with confidence as well as with fear and trembling. Let us never forget then the importance of manifeſting the ſpirit of Chriſtians, and of ſhewing how much we profit by the means we enjoy.

Let every part of your conduct in the churches be an act of worſhip and obedience to Chriſt. Without this, the ordinances will do you no good. The ordinances themſelves may be perverted to pleaſe the fleſh. When properly attended to, they beautifully harmonize with the great doctrines of the goſpel. They are in fact theſe doctrines embodied, and therefore the more cloſe we keep to the ordinances as delivered by Jeſus, the more harmonious and juſt will the repreſentation be which we give of theſe doctrines, the better ſhall we underſtand them, and the more may we expect that by the bleſſing of God they ſhall be uſeful to thoſe around us. In ſo far as we depart from the ſimplicity of the ordinances, ſo far we darken the counſel of God, and draw away the attention of men to our own devices, perplexing the minds of thoſe who are beginning to think of eternal things, and equally injuring our own ſouls.

Let me intreat thoſe who are called to the

paſtoral office diligently to ſtudy the word of God, that they may rightly divide it, giving to all a portion in due ſeaſon. See to it, my brethren, that in all reſpects ye exemplify the power of the doctrines of Chriſt, in raiſing you above this preſent world. Some of you have many temptations to receive thoſe whom the word of God doth not allow you to admit into the churches. The ſupport you receive, it may be, is often ſcanty. It may be inſufficient to maintain you, and an increaſe of the church, were you to regard temporal things, might be very deſirable on this account. This may lead us to ſhut our eyes when perſons apply for admiſſion, and to be too deſirous to admit them. But, brethren, be not greedy of filthy lucre. Be faithful in the Lord's vineyard, and you ſhall not want. The labourer is worthy of his hire. He feeds the ravens that cry, and he will alſo feed you. Be not aſhamed, if neceſſary, to follow his example who ſaid, "Yea, ye yourſelves know that theſe hands have miniſtered unto my neceſſities, and to them that were with me. I have ſhewed you all things, how that ſo labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 34, 35. Do not ſay the churches will ſink altogether. No; the Lord will protect and preſerve them. He may try your faith, but he will not forſake you. We admire thoſe who have died for Jeſus, and ſhall we refuſe to en-

dure hardneſs for him? I know that many object to the ſtrictneſs enjoined in the word of God, that by ſuch conduct we ſhould cut off the ſupport of miniſters altogether, that we could have only illiterate men for paſtors, and ſo forth. But all our wiſdom will not promote the kingdom of Chriſt. I heſitate not to maintain, that if well educated miniſters can be procured only by neglecting one of the plain injunctions of Chriſt, we had better be without them. But this is not the caſe; they may receive a proper education, and if they are men of a right ſpirit they will patiently endure afflictions as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, not ſeeking great things for themſelves, not counting their lives dear, that they may finiſh their courſe with joy, and the miniſtry they have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God.

Attention to the admiſſion of members not only belongs to the elders, but to all the holy brethren. Let all the churches look diligently to this matter, for on this their peace, harmony and proſperity depend.

Throughout this publication, the diſtinction between the obedience which we owe in religion only to Jeſus, and that which, by his authority, we are bound to give to our civil rulers, has been uniformly ſuppoſed. Brethren, the conduct of Chriſtians in this matter is apt to be miſunderſtood. Let us be careful to ſhew, that while in religion we call no man, father, we are among the peace-

able and quiet of the land, being in ſubjection to our rulers, not only for wrath, but for conſcience ſake. Let us ſhew that our refuſal to acknowledge any human authority in religion does not proceed from pride and diſlike of ſubordination, but from a ſenſe of duty. Let our obedience to the powers ordained of God be cheerful and exemplary; let us obey, honour, and give thanks for magiſtrates, and be ready to every good work. Let us be thankful for the privileges we enjoy. Let us pray for the peace and welfare of our country, and thus, by well-doing in every reſpect, put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men.

INDEX.

A

Addreſs, the AUTHOR'S, on the ſubject of this treatiſe, *to Chriſtians in general*—the various ordinances of Chriſt muſt be attended to from regard to his authority, 460. the criminality of treating with indifference any thing in religion, 461. and of thoſe who, while they condemn religious perſecution, continue in churches which in their ſtandards adopt human authority in religion, 462, 463. no avoiding the accuſation of *party-ſpirit*, if the laws of Chriſt be obeyed, 464. the danger of a worldly ſpirit, *ibid.* and of unbelief, 465. refutation of the general apology of there being no pure churches, 466. remarks applicable to thoſe who remain in churches againſt which they themſelves exclaim, 467. whence ſpring plauſible objections againſt ſcriptural churches, and how they have influence, 468, 469. the evil and danger of trifling with any part of the will of God, 469. falſe reports of churches ought to be guarded againſt, 470. and the motives from which they are heard or repeated ought to be well examined, 471.

——————— *to members of Chriſtian churches*—much yet to be learned by them, 471. remarks on the paſtoral office, 471,—473. Inquiry, and humility of mind recommended, 473, 474. the neceſſity of ſtrict attention to every part of conduct, 474. to the temper and ſpirit in which ordinances are attended to, *ibid.* of doing every thing in the church as an act of worſhip and obedience to Chriſt, 475. of paſtors duly qualifying themſelves for, and attending to their duty, 476, 477. of all the church attending carefully to the admiſſion of members, 478.—See *Chriſtian churches*.

Anabaptiſts of Munſter, noticed, 116.

Apoſtles, how qualified to eſtabliſh the firſt churches, 39. the dignity of their office, 41. their powers, 44. were moſt particular in their directions to the churches, and regarded obedience to theſe as of great importance, 45. did not interfere with the civil laws of nations, 50. their uniformity in the practices they enjoined on churches, *ibid.* as ſuch, are ſtill alive, and ſpeaking to men by their word, 54. they united zeal for the converſion of ſinners, with ſtrict attention to the welfare of believers, 121. collected churches only by inſtruction

and perſuaſion, 133. held out no worldly motives to induce men to become Chriſtians, 137. never aſſerted their apoſtolical authority over the churches without neceſſity, 164. can have no ſucceſſors, 210.

Apoſtolic churches, their conſtitution examined, 129,—173. how collected, 133. Chriſt governed them by love, 138. deviation from their order renders any religious ſociety unworthy of the name of a Chriſtian church, 169. the character of their members, and objections to it anſwered, 173,—206. retaining improper members, one cauſe of their defection, 180. the offices in them, 214,—267. (ſee *offices*) had each a plurality of paſtors, 225, 226. 230. women employed in them to teach and watch over their own ſex, 241,—243. ordinances obſerved by them, 282,—340. viz. preaching, 282,—286. teaching, 286. exhortation, *ibid.* reading the Scriptures, 287. the fellowſhip, 289,—291. the Lord's ſupper, 292,—301. prayer and praiſe, 302,—304. faſting, 304,—307. ſanctification of the firſt day of the week, 308,—312. baptiſm, 313,—340. diſcipline, 341,—370. the excellence and advantage of their conſtitution obſerved, 395.—407. from its ſimplicity, 395. its ſuitableneſs to a ſtate of fraternal union, 397. its tendency to cheriſh dependence on Chriſt, 398. to detect falſe profeſſors, *ibid.* to promote humility, or juſt views of a perſon's own character, 400. to prevent error, 401. to ſpread the goſpel, 402. and by what means, 403,—407.

Apoſtolic practice, conſequences of not holding it ſtrictly, as enjoined on the firſt churches, 70,—74. objections to its obſervance at preſent, ſtated and anſwered, 74,—78. the laws of it not fitted for any except believers in Chriſt, 174.

B

Ballantine, Mr, quoted on the elderſhip or preſbytery of the apoſtolical churches, 225,—230.

Baptiſe, meaning of the term, 338,—340.

Baptiſm, a divine, but not a ſocial ordinance, 313. is emblematic, *ibid.* has come in the room of circumciſion, 325, 326. the mode of it, 338,—340.

Baptiſm, infant, ſtands on the ſame footing with the ſanctification of the Lord's day, 325. arguments for, and anſwers to objections againſt it, 325,—340.

Bigots, why conſiſtent Chriſtians ſo called, 6.
Bigotry defined, 123. and cenſured, 124. the charge of it frequently miſapplied, 124,—126.
Biſhops, their being conſidered ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, was the origin of that ſpiritual wickedneſs, conſummated in the man of ſin, 47.
BLACKBURN, Archdeacon, quoted on the Reformation, 102.
BOSTON, Mr, of Ettrick, extract from his life, ſhewing how the union betwixt church and ſtate leads to unſcriptural views of ſubjection to magiſtracy, 442, 443.
Breaking of bread, (ſee *Lord's ſupper*).
Brotherly love, why ſo much inculcated by the apoſtles, 139.

C

CALVIN, a tenet of his, 105. on the weekly obſervance of the Lord's ſupper, 298.
CAMPBELL, Dr, quoted on the meaning of the word *church*, 130, —133. on clerical diſtinctions, 142,—153. his arguments, ſhewing that the apoſtles can have no ſucceſſors, 216, 217. his confutation of the ſuppoſed diſtinction betwixt preaching and ruling elders, or clergy and laity, 231,—236. on the ſuppoſed indelibility of the clerical character, 272,—277. referred to on religious titles, 280. on the meaning of the terms, ſchiſm and hereſy, 386, 387. on the union betwixt church and ſtate, 430,—433.
CHARLES V. anecdote of, 114. note.
CHRIST, his kingdom immoveable, his laws therefore unchangeable, 60, 61. governs his churches by love, 138.
Chriſtians, deſire of knowing the whole revealed will of God, and obeying what they do know, eſſential to their character, 9.
Chriſtian churches, the purpoſes of, 18. 134, 135. laws neceſſary for them, 19. the wiſdom of God alone capable of making ſuch laws, 19, 20. their order fixed in the Scriptures, 23. the contrary diſproved, 23,—36 that all Chriſtians are bound to obſerve the univerſal and approved practices of the firſt churches, recorded in Scripture, proved, and objections refuted, 36,—100. authority and qualifications given the apoſtles to eſtabliſh the firſt churches, 39. no liberty permitted to theſe churches to deviate in any thing from the

commandments and rules given them, 40. are representations of the church above, 135. duties of members to each other, 136. are calculated to promote the conversion of sinners, 137. how the government of these differs from civil governments, 140. possess no discretionary powers, 141. the laws prescribed for them not intended nor adapted for unbelievers, 142. were completely independent of each other, 157, —159. 163. but their independency does not prevent their union and co-operation, 167. character of their members, and objections to it answered, 173,—206. ought each to have a plurality of elders, 250. and of deacons, 252 should make the gospel sound out from them, 254,—256. what kind of subjection they owe to their elders, 258. 261, 262. ought to be much in prayer for them and for each other, 263. to cherish a spirit of mutual submission in the Lord, 263. to admonish their elders, if necessary, 264.

Christianity leaves office-bearers and others just where it found them, as to civil honour or condition, 278.

Church, meaning of the word, 130. does not denote elders, nor other representatives, 143,—152. objections to this, taken from Acts ii. 41. 47. iv. 4. v. 14. considered and refuted, 153, —164. the true nature of a church of Christ, 169. 366. admission to it the right of all who love the Saviour, 375, evils arising from its union with the world, 408.

Church members, their character, 193,—206. remarks as to their admission, 206,—218. love, the only bond of their union, 347. must avoid unkindness to each other, 348. offences not to be allowed to remain, but discipline must be applied, *ibid.* and 349. See *Address*.

Church order, evils from not keeping its end in view, 118. the nature and principles of it, not adapted for wicked nor merely moral men, 142.

Church representative, not known till about the middle of the third century, 150. the notion of it a mere usurper of later date, 151.

Church and state, consequences of alliance between them, 408,—458.

Churches, see *Apostolical*, see *Christian*.

Circumcision, what it signified, 321. superseded by baptism which comes in its place, 325.

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS referred to, on infant baptism, 334.

Clergy, consequences of distinctions among them, 143,—152. the hypocrity and immorality of such, a strong hold of infidelity, 425,—428.

Clergy and laity, the distinction between, its history and confutation, 230,—236. how kept up, 279.

Confessions of faith of human composition, what led to them, 106. injured the Reformation, *ibid* led to intolerance amongst Protestants, 107. regarded as standards, 113. that of Westminster quoted, *ibid.*

Conscience, the danger of disregarding its dictates, 127.

Council of sixty-six bishops, met at Carthage in, 248. referred to on the subject of infant baptism, 334.

Covenant with Abraham, the nature and import of it considered, 314,—325.

D

Day, the Lord's, its history, and the obligation to sanctify it, 308, —312.

Deaconesses, or female deacons, were in the apostolical churches, 241,—243. their utility, 166. their office ought to be revived in Christian churches, *ibid.* objections answered, *ibid.* and 267.

Deacons, origin of their office, their qualifications and business, 244. some of those in the apostolical churches were women, 245,—250. every church ought to have a plurality of deacons, 251 should be respected in the church, 264. and have their fullest confidence, 265. who eligible to the office, *ibid.* were ordained, in the apostolical churches, by imposition of hands, 269 and by prayer and fasting, 280. the omission of ordination, in later times, has led to an unscriptural distinction betwixt them and pastors, 270.

Discipline in churches treated of, 341,—370. its necessity, 341. its objects, 344. who are the subjects of it, 345. the leading rule of it in Matthew xviii. 15,—18. considered, 346,—353. public offences, what, and how to be treated, 353. every case of offence should be probed thoroughly, 355. admonition ought to be tendered with meekness and affection,

ibid. immediate exclusion necessary in certain cases, 366. the judgment of charity, so called, tends to mislead in cases of discipline, 367, 368. confession of sin not sufficient in certain cases, 369. lukewarmness in religion requires admonition, *ibid* *suspending* of members, unscriptural, 360. conduct of a church towards members who withdraw or are excluded, 362 towards those who cause divisions, *ibid.* every case should be conducted with much patience, 363. offence must not be taken but on good grounds, 364. its excellence and importance, 367,—370.

Diversity of opinion amongst Christians respecting social worship, accounted for, and its evils pointed out, 101,—112.

Doctrine and discipline, improper distinction betwixt these censured, and the evils resulting from it pointed out, 122.—128.

DODDRIDGE, Dr, referred to on the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, 299. note.

E

ECKIUS, Luther's adversary, employed same weapons against him which the Presbyterians use against the Independents, 163.

EDWARDS, President, quoted, 59. on the parable of the tares and the wheat, 194.

Elder, origin of the term, 221. that, and bishop, synonymous, 219.

Elders, their qualifications, 219. their business, 220. 257. by whom chosen, 222. the distinction betwixt preaching and ruling elders, 231—236. no superiority of office amongst the elders, although they may distribute their labours according to their peculiar gifts, 237,—240. 253. their right to maintenance, 241. every church ought to have a plurality of elders, 250, 251. not absolutely necessary that they relinquish their worldly employments, 253,—256. but it is very desirable that one of the eldership, in every church, should wholly devote his time to the work of the ministry, 255. have rule, and must be obeyed, only according to the laws of Jesus Christ, 253. must not require nor accept obedience to themselves, but only for the King of Sion 259. ought to be jealous lest the people submit to them instead of Christ, 260. were appointed in the apostolical churches by imposition of hands, 269. objections to this *now*, answered, 270. their ordination preceded by prayer and fasting, 280, 281.

Eraſtians noticed, 116.

ERSKINE, Dr, quoted, on what was typified by the *outer court*, 139. on the character and privileges of the Chriſtian church, 197,—206 on the weekly obſervance of the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, 297.

Evangeliſts, their office in the apoſtolical churches, 218.

Exhortation, an ordinance in the apoſtolical churches, 286.

F

Faſting and prayer, an ordinance of Chriſt, and obſerved in the apoſtolical churches, 304—306.

Feaſts of charity, ſee *love-feaſts*.

Fellowſhip meetings, as formed and conducted in Scotland, reſemble Chriſtian churches more nearly than thoſe ſocieties which are generally denominated churches, 169. their origin in Scotland, 170. 171.

Fellowſhip, the, or contribution, a church ordinance, 289. the purpoſe of it, 290, 291.

Forbearance, 370—383. preliminary remarks on it, 371, deſpotiſm, the conſequence of churches not exerciſing it, 372. the neceſſity of it ſhewn from the various attainments of church members, 373. and from due regard to the rights of conſcience, 374. it ſhould alſo be ſhewn by individual members to the church, 374. the apoſtles exhorted the churches to the practice of it, 376—379. it will be found to extend in proportion as real religion prevails in a church, 380. evils ariſing from the want of it, 381. but it muſt not prevent any one from obeying his own convictions of duty, though doing ſo might be offenſive to others, 382. points requiring forbearance muſt diminiſh, in proportion as the word of God is followed, 384.

G

GISBORNE, Mr, his excellent remarks on the parable of the tares and the wheat, 195 196.

GLAS, Mr, quoted on impoſition of hands, 271.

GOD, believers reſemble him in exact proportion as they know him. 5 beſtows bleſſings on his people only in the way of obedience to his commandments. 134.

Goods, community of, not a matter of apoſtolical injunction—the practice of the church at Jeruſalem, recorded in Acts iv, conſidered, 75—86.

H

Hair, long, what in the ſenſe of Scripture; and why prohibited, 93.

HALLET, Mr, quoted on hereſy, 390, 391.

Hands, impoſition of, an ancient cuſtom, 268. uſed on various occaſions, *ibid.*

HARDY, Dr, treated with ridicule the idea of the order of the church of Scotland being preſcribed in Scripture, 166. anecdote of him, *ibid.* note.

Hereſy, ſee *Schiſm.*

I

Indifferent things, a quotation from Locke reſpecting, 12. danger of holding any thing in religion to be ſuch, exemplified in Melancthon the reformer, 42.

K

KING JAMES I. a favourite ſaying of his, 142.

KING, Lord, his enquiry into the order, &c. of the firſt churches referred to, 50.

Kiſs of charity, what meant by it, 91, 92.

L

LOCKE quoted, reſpecting things indifferent, and the power of the civil magiſtrate in religion, 12—14. reſpecting the neceſſity of laws to every church or ſociety, 19. on the evils of the union of the church and the world, 416. on perſecuting churches, 433. on their inconſiſtency in perſecuting opinions, and yet tolerating the moſt flagitious vices, 434—436. on the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of toleration, and its advantages both to Chriſtianity and civil ſociety, 443—457.

Lord's ſupper, daily obſervance of it, not enjoined on, nor generally practiſed by the firſt churches, 86—89. an ordinance in the apoſtolical churches, 292. is a ſocial ordinance, *ibid.* was obſerved every Lord's day, 293—297 has been much abuſed and miſunderſtood, 300. objection to the weekly obſervance of it anſwered, 301.

Love-feaſts, congregational, no part of the practice of the apoſtolic churches, 89, 90.

M

MACKNIGHT, Dr, quoted on the office of female deacons, 242.

245—250. on the excellence of church diſcipline, 367---370.

Magiſtrate, his interference in matters of religion, originates in Judaiſm, 115. obedience to him in civil things, the law of Chriſt, 396.

MARTYR, JUSTIN, quoted on infant baptiſm, 334.

MIDDLETON, Dr, quoted on the effect of civil eſtabliſhments of Chriſtianity in perverting the mind as to the Scripture doctrine of ſubmiſſion to magiſtracy, 439, 440.

MOSHEIM, Dr, referred to, 50. maintains that change of circumſtances warrants deviations from the practice of apoſtolic churches, 61. abſurdity of his reaſoning ſhewn, 63. referred to, 81. quoted on the mutual love and beneficence of the firſt Chriſtians, 85. on the independency of the churches in the early times, 163.

O

O'BEIRNE, Dr, Biſhop of Meath, quotation from his charge to his clergy, on hypocriſy and immorality amongſt clergymen, 425.

Offices in the Chriſtian church, all reſolveable into thoſe of biſhop, elder, and deacon, 68. extraordinary offices did not properly belong to any church, *ibid.* what theſe were, 216. that the ſtated offices were thoſe only of elder and deacon, 219.

Opinion, ſee *Diverſity*.

Ordinances, departure from their ſimplicity, generally the firſt ſtep in the progreſs of error, 46. of great importance in the view of the apoſtles, 48. not arbitrary nor indifferent, *ibid.* the *ſame*, delivered to all the churches, *ibid.* called *commandments* of the Lord, 49. in their obſervance, no regard to be paid to the local or temporary circumſtances of churches, 51. New Teſtament contains a complete ſyſtem of thoſe to be obſerved by Chriſtian churches, 52. thoſe obſerved by the apoſtolical churches, 282---340.

Ordination treated of, 168---181. the term has been miſapplied, to ſupport the diſtinction between clergy and laity, 268. its meaning, *ibid.* does not confer an indelible character, 171---277. how the original idea of it was perverted, 277. its abuſe in ſome modern miſſions, 278.

ORIGEN referred to, on the ſubject of infant baptiſm, 334.

Outer court of the temple, what typified by it, 139.

OWEN, Dr, quoted on the meaning of the term *baptiſe*, 340. note.

P

PAUL's vow, Acts xviii. 18. xxi. 23. conſidered, 96, 97.

PELAGIUS referred to on the ſubject of infant baptiſm, 333.

Perſecution has always been more directed againſt deviations from laws of human invention, than againſt groſs ſins, 115.

POPE the greateſt heretic, 390.

Praiſe, a church ordinance, but not excluſively ſuch, 303.

Prayer, a church ordinance, but not excluſively ſuch, 302. in the church, not confined to the elders, 303.

Preaching an ordinance of Chriſt, 282. and a church ordinance, 283. does not excluſively belong to paſtors, *ibid.* is the right and duty of thoſe who have talents for it, 284.

Precepts, thoſe of the New Teſtament complete for all the purpoſes which Chriſt intended for his churches, 52. their practical tendency ſhewn, 57. delivered in the ſame manner reſpecting church order, as reſpecting doctrines, 58. of univerſal and perpetual obligation, 63---68.

Preſbytery of a church, of whom compoſed, 225.

Prophets in the apoſtolical churches, their office, 217.

R

RANDAL, Mr, quoted, 74. 106. on the weekly obſervance of the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, 296.

Reformation from Popery, in what it began, 47. injured by confeſſions of faith too ſpeedily drawn up, 106.

Reformers, Chriſtians cannot be ſufficiently grateful to God for having raiſed them up, 102. laboured under prejudices from education, *ibid.* were afraid of reforming ſtrictly according to the Scriptures, *ibid.* oppoſed by rulers inſtigated by the prieſts, 103. adopted a middle courſe, and why, 104. confounded the kingdom of Chriſt with the kingdoms of this world, and religious with civil freedom, 105 made too much uſe of the fathers, and too little of Chriſt and his apoſtles, *ibid.* their practice, in ſome inſtances, greatly different from their principles, 106. very ſoon drew up their *Confeſſions*, and ſo marred the Reformation, *ibid.* their Confeſſions different, and forced upon the nations, 107—114. their conduct a leading cauſe of the diverſity of opinions amongſt Proteſtants, 115.

Religion, civil eſtabliſhments of, their conſequences on Chriſtianity conſidered, 429—458. their origin, 439. their injury to the ſtate, 439—443.

ROBERTSON, Dr, quoted on intolerance in religion, as ſhewn by the Reformers, 107—113.

RUTHERFORD, Mr SAMUEL, quoted on the evils of the union of the church and the world, 417.

ROME, the church of, its abominations began with deviation from the apoſtolic model of churches, 102.

S

Saints, the term, applied only to believers, 177.

Schiſm and hereſy, 384---394. meaning of the term *ſchiſm*, 384. in what this evil conſiſts, *ibid.* ſeparation, unleſs ſinful, does not imply it, 385. *Hereſy*, meaning of the term, 385. great affinity in ſignification between theſe two terms, 386. in what hereſy conſiſts, 387, 388. ſeparating from Anti-chriſtian ſocieties, not hereſy, but the avoiding of it, 389. ſuch ſocieties in their nature heretical, and the Pope the greateſt heretic, 390. objections againſt leaving a church, though corrupt, anſwered, 392, 393. but they will remain, while human authority in religion is in any degree retained, 394.

Scriptures, their perfection, 1. 18. why venerated by Chriſtians, 2. holding any part of them indifferent and unimportant, cenſured as an impeachment of the wiſdom of God, *ibid.* conſiſtent in every part, 3. effect of ignorance of any one part of them, *ibid.* holineſs, their object throughout, 4. what they ſay reſpecting the order of churches, thought by ſome to render men leſs ſpiritual, *ibid.* are all practical, 6. 39. are properly reſpected when wholly attended to, 7. benefit of minutely attending to them, *ibid.* proneneſs in men to err, a reaſon of diligent enquiry and study, 9. conſequences of a ſuppoſed latitude in them, 10. requiſite diſpoſitions for the study of them, *ibid.* destroyed altogether as a rule, if men may add to, or take from them, 11. benefit ariſing from studying them in all their parts, 15. awful judgment denounced on thoſe who add to, or take away from any part of them, 16. that judgment ſuppoſes that nothing but the Scriptures can bind mens conſciences in religion, 18. are adapted to the character and circumstances of men, and

must therefore contain a clear and precise rule, 18. reading them a church ordinance, 287.

Separation from the world, evils arising from the neglect of, 408—443. such separation a part of the redemption of Christ, 408. all the ordinances of the gospel tend to promote it, 409. how it came to be neglected, *ibid.* disregard of the interests of each other, amongst church members, one fruit of this neglect, 410. another, that the apostolical directions to turn away, and those relating to mutual oversight, love, &c. were rendered useless, 411. a third, was the union of the church with the world, with its numerous train of mischiefs to all, 412—415. 423, 424. to ministers particularly, 415—421. and to their labours, 423.

T

Tares and the wheat, the parable of, considered, 193, 194. remarkable quotation from President Edwards on this subject, *ibid.* excellent observations of Mr Gisborne on this parable, 195.

Teaching, an ordinance in the apostolical churches, and what it is, 285.

Titles, religious, unscriptural and prejudicial, 279. were multiplied as real religion declined, 280.

Toleration first admitted in the United Provinces, 111. the reasonableness and necessity of it, 443—453. the benefit of it to the state, 457, 458.

Translators, of the common version of the Scriptures, did not translate the same words uniformly, 147.

Truth, divine, why not revealed in the form of human systems, 56.

W

WALKER, Mr, of Dublin, quoted, 54. 61.

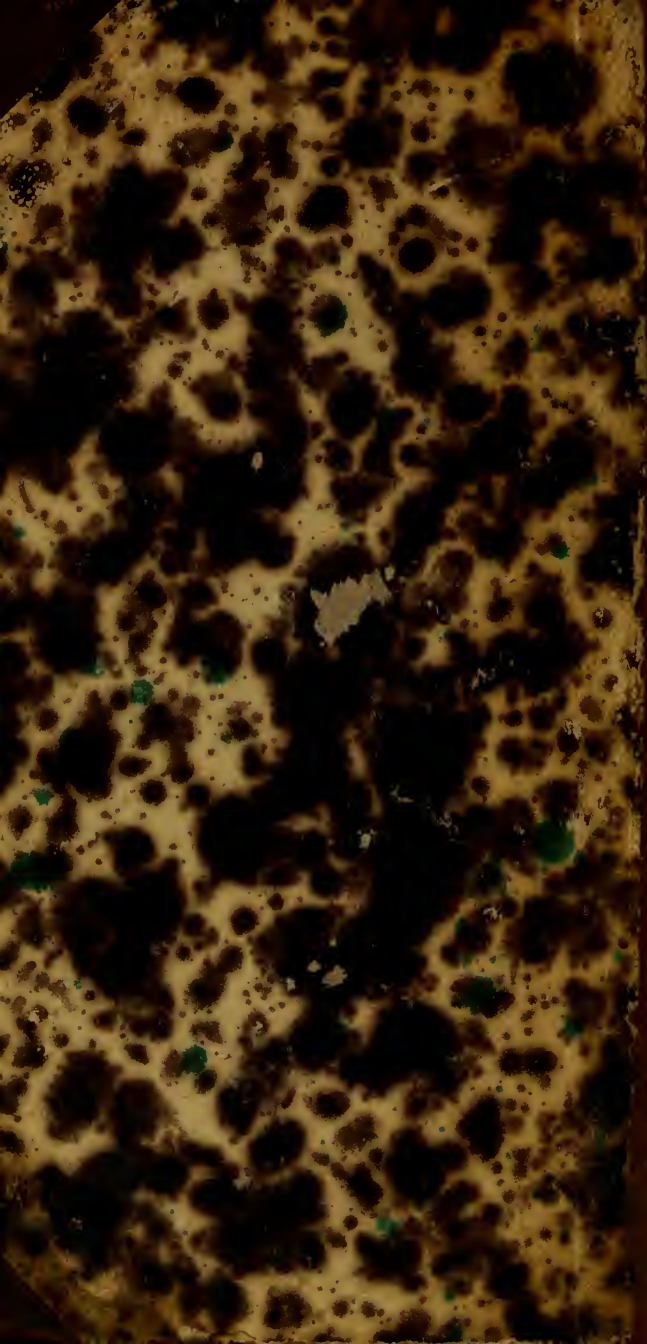
Washing the saints' feet, what meant by this, 92.

WICKLIFFE disliked applying *church* and *churchmen* merely to the clergy, 152. note. thought priests and deacons the only two offices in the church, 219. note.

Will-worship, abhorred of God, 21. wherein it consists, *ibid.*

THE END.

J. RITCHIE, PRINTER, BLACKFRIARS WYND.

Erratum omitted.—Page 153. line 19. for *members* read *numbers.*

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01237 4676